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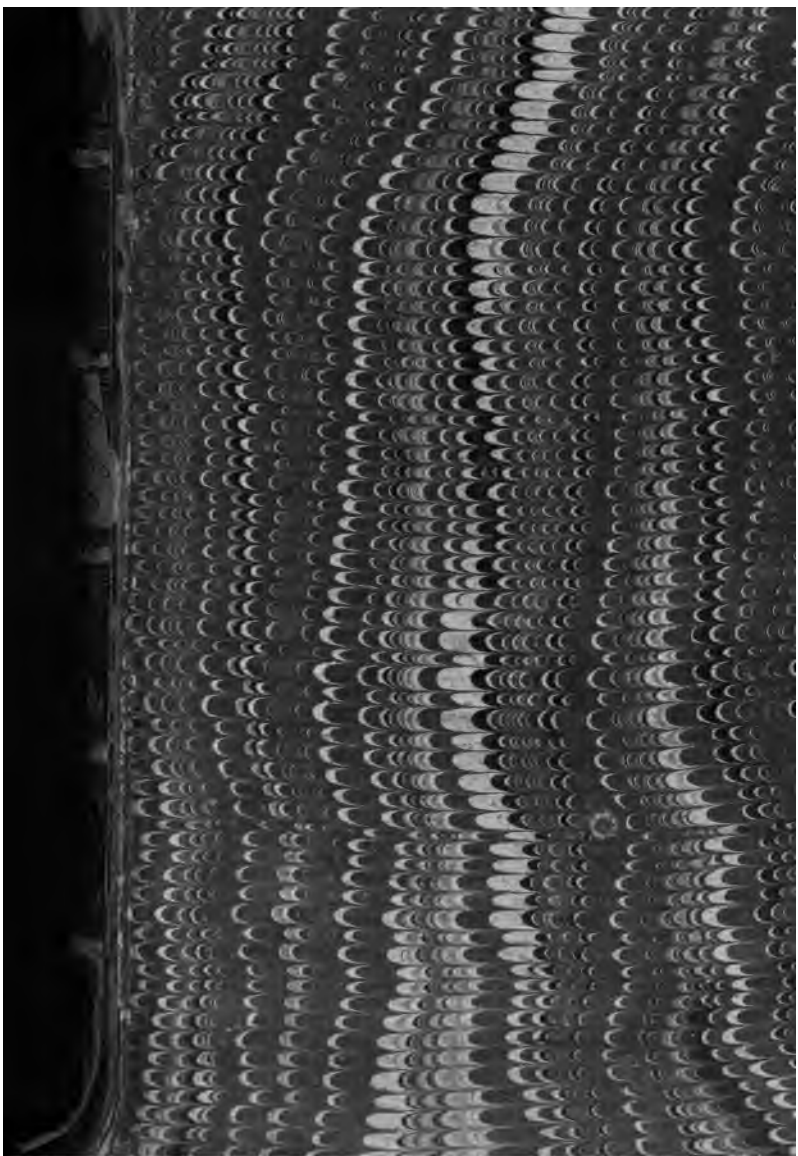
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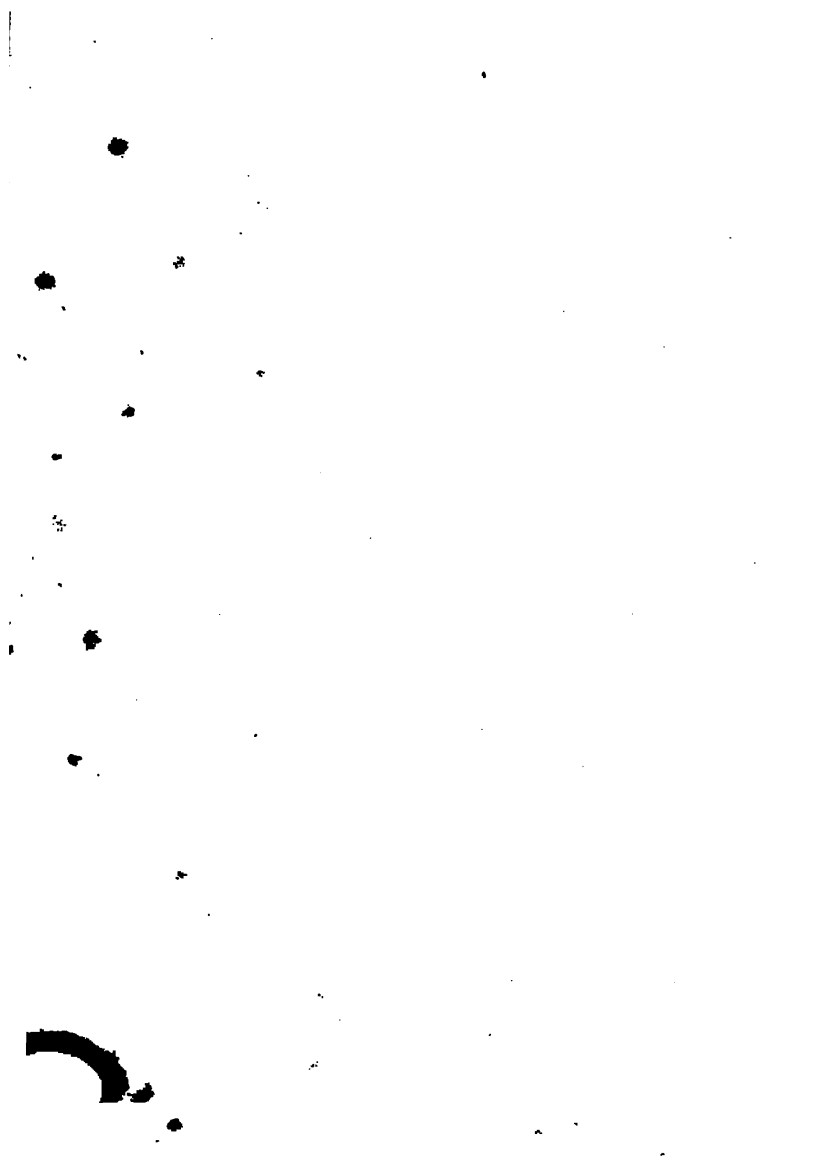




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was
to



Miss Geddes
from Anna Smith
1848





SEMMEL'S TOWN SWITZER

VILLAGE TALES

FROM

ALSATIA.

BY

ALEXANDER WEILL.

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN

BY

SIR ALEXANDER DUFF GORDON, BART.

LONDON:

JOSEPH CUNDALL, 12 OLD BOND STREET.

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P R E F A C E.

A WELL-KNOWN German author, to whom we are indebted for most of the following preface, relates a conversation upon the subject of German novels which he had some thirty years ago with the distinguished critic and philosopher Schleiermacher, who maintained that, in spite of the high excellence his countrymen had attained in that branch of art, it had not yet reached its full development : according to his theory, the whole life and manners of the people ought to be reflected in the novel as it were in a glass ; and Schleiermacher predicted that actual

peasant life would form the subject of speculation in the novels of the present time.

Nothing could form a better introduction to Weill's Alsatian sketches than these remarks of Schleiermacher, for the stories now offered to the public in many respects meet the demands of this great critic. These tales, we believe, first appeared as a feuilleton in a Strasburg newspaper, and were subsequently collected into a volume; in point of date they preceded Auerbach's Village Tales from the Black Forest, from which they stand out in remarkable relief. They present the reverse of the medal,—the harsh realities of peasant life, with all its struggles, vices and virtues, as contrasted with Auerbach's more poetical views.

The author belongs to the soil, and is of the men whom he describes: he therefore feels a deep interest in their life and condition; and in many respects

Alsatia affords a peculiarly favourable field for such speculations. The country in which the scenes are laid is a fruitful district, bounded on one side by the Rhine, on the other by gently swelling hills: it produces everything in abundance, and sustains a happy, contented, and tolerably wealthy people, which was early civilized, and which took a prominent part in the great events of modern days. In Alsatia there is great religious toleration; Catholics, Protestants and Jews live in familiar intercourse; and even the lower classes enjoy sufficient civil and religious liberty to allow a full development of their moral qualities. The Alsatians are an honest, German race, adhering to their national language, and to their old customs and opinions, and yet by no means unwilling to form part of the great nation which exercises so powerful an influence in the destinies of the whole world.

The original work contains four stories, named after the heroines who severally figure in them,—Stasi or Anastasia, Udilie and Gertrude, Sehnel or Salome, and Frohni or Veronika. The last-named story has for the present been omitted; but should the three first meet with success at all resembling that which these tales have had in Germany, the story of “Frohni” will be added to the collection.

A. D. G.

London, November, 1847.

STASI.

STASI was a simple, homely girl, who lived in Sesenheim on the Rhine, a village of which the name has being made classical by Göthe's love. No one, on seeing this girl with her green cotton gown, her smoothly combed fair hair, and her inexpressive face, would have imagined that she had a tender heart: nay, when she came out of church on Sundays, holding a prayer-book with brass clasps like an automaton in her hand, balancing her little cap with silver fringes carelessly on her head, with a more than devout look in her eyes,—those who saw her might have smiled, and said, what a pity that there are no longer any convents! and, if ill-natured, would have added, the girl is either a fool or a visionary. This however was not the case: Stasi's intellect was somewhat narrow; she had made but little progress

at school, and did not even understand French. Her face wore an expression either of slight sadness or of insensibility,—you could not tell which : moreover she never went to balls and dances, and avoided going into company, because her awkwardness and timidity exposed her to ridicule. On the other hand, she was active, neat, and exact in her housekeeping, which she did entirely herself, tranquil in manner, and as benevolent as her circumstances allowed her to be. Her companion, friend and confidant was her mother ; to her she complained of all her pains and sorrows, to her she confessed all her pangs of conscience, to her she told all that her playfellows and neighbours said of and against her ; for among countryfolks there is no lack of slander against those who keep aloof from their wild orgies. “ Yes, she knows what’s what,” said they ; “ she likes poaching in the dark,” and so forth. Her mother again it was who used to shorten the long winter evenings with stories of her own life, or tales out of the Bible. Stasi had a brother too, a subaltern officer, to whom she often wrote all her grievances in bad German, who sometimes sent her presents in return, and always assured her that

everything should be different when once he was at home again.

Stasi's mother, Amie, had a confidant in her turn, and who this was, courteous reader, you would never guess. He was a queer fish ; you might have used him as a scarecrow, as a sign over a tobacconist's shop, nay even as a soldier or a spy ; but he was best of all as a confidant ; for the old Jew Gumper was silent, as silent as the fish which he ate every Saturday, as silent as his wallet, which received everything and returned nothing, as silent as his old threadbare red coat, whose former owner he had never been able to discover. Gumper was the court jew, friend, adviser, nay father of the family in this house, and nothing was done in it without his consent.

Stasi wanted a new gown. "Well, my child," said Gumper, "so you are going to play the fool like the rest of them : only look at my coat, 't is an emigrant of 1789, as sure as I am alive ; and if I were to show it to the minister, who knows but it might be turned and come into favour again : but my maxim is to have one coat and one God, and that was your father's mind too, whom you can scarce remember :

he was a brave soldier, but you and Adalbert don't even know his story. Has Adalbert sent you any money, eh Stasi? Ah, I talk too much to please you; all you want is to have the gown, and that I should buy the stuff for it. Well well, you shall have one, and the finest in the village too. My daughter wore the like, and what has she got by it? the Lord have mercy upon her! And hark-ye, Stasi, our wise men say that folks ought not to go out with stains upon their garments."

"It must have been a scourer that said that."

"O Stasi, what a sharp tongue you have! but remember that there are stains which can never be washed out, nay not with all the soap of Egypt, as the Prophet saith. Why do I always wear my old red coat? why but because my daughter has got stains in her garment."

"What is she doing now?" said Stasi in a low voice.

"How should I know? nobody goes near her; she does nothing but cry the livelong day, and has never shown herself in my presence, though I have not spoken a single unkind word to her.

"Send her to me," replied Stasi, "I'll comfort her."

"Will you? but do you take warning by her example."

"And why does not her sweetheart marry her?" said the mother, who came in at this moment.

"Lord God!" replied Gumper, "there's no religion in the world, not one drop of faith left. Formerly when a gentleman seduced a girl—and we are all human—he wiped out the disgrace by marriage; but now, *mon Dieu*!—and I assure you, Amie, Jews and Christians are both alike,—there is not a pin to choose between them."

"There you see," said the old woman, smiling; "if you had not married, this would not have happened to you: and you and I should have made a match of it in the end; what say you, Gumper?"

Amie thus tried to turn the conversation to a more cheerful subject, but Gumper continued: "And what would have been the good of that? Then your daughter would have had a child: it is an affliction to which I was predestined from above—the child is sent to me by God!"

Amie burst out laughing. "I have some news to

tell you," said Gumper, "which will soon stop your laughing. Since the missionaries were here, the Catholics have determined no longer to allow the Protestants to go to the same church with them: they may build one for themselves, say they; and this is only the beginning of the story." Amie and Stasi turned pale. "Indeed, Gumper," cried they, "how can you tell us this so coolly?" "Why not?" said he; "when all of you are at loggerheads together, we may have a little peace."

"If my poor husband were but alive," said Amie.

"Ah, he saw what was coming: but don't be in such a fright; the overstrung bow soon breaks. If my old coat could but tell them, it has seen worse things than this, and it is as little afraid as its master. The missionary nonsense will have its day like all the rest; but I must own that things look badly for religion when the people run out of the churches to listen to preaching in the highways and byeways: the whole affair is just like the robbery that was committed the other day at the Maire's house. One fellow made the dogs bark in the street: then all the folks came running to see what was the matter and made a ter-

rible uproar: in the meantime two thieves cleared the house. Well, Stasi, if you will come tomorrow, we will go to Bischweiler and buy you a gown."

"No thank you, Gumper," said she, "I don't want one now."

"I thought as much." The conversation paused awhile. "Apropos," said Gumper, "do you know that that merry fellow Marzolf has come back again? But he is no longer Marzolf now; he calls himself Monsieur Marceau, speaks nothing but French, and is as proud as a peacock. Only think, Amie, he wont have me go to the house any more, and yet I have more than once sent him money by the post without his father's knowledge. I am sorry for his mother, for she has fixed all her hopes upon him, and now he laughs at her old-fashioned plaited petticoats and things. But old Gumper made no bones with him: I read him a thorough good lesson. They say he is so learned, but I can tell you how he studied: he was at Nancy for some time, where he made love to all the girls, and they taught him to flatter in French; for he is a handsome lad, and rich into the bargain. Then he seduced a few of them, and they taught him

to curse and swear. A horsedealer from Nancy told me that he seduced a handsome girl called Melanie, a basket-maker's daughter; but that's no business of mine: old Gumper can hold his tongue till it is time he should speak. What is he going to do here, the scapegrace? display his fine clothes and his wealth, and his hatred of the Jews? that won't last, at any rate. Only think, his mother told me that he reproached her because forsooth I had so much influence in the house. To be sure his father lends me as much money as I want, but why? because I am honest and pay him every farthing again. And if he takes no interest, the devil may thank him for it, not I. I make it up to him a thousandfold. And why is the young fellow so angry? Only because I told him plainly that I did not like his proud ways, that speaking French was not an education, and that he might have done better with the ten thousand francs which he has squandered in the last three years. But that is the way with young people now-a-days, they will hear no reason. He even went so far as to threaten me, but he does not know that Gumper was a soldier for six years and fought in Italy. However nothing

I can say will be of any use : he is master in the house, and soon will be so in the whole village, and the mercer will have plenty to do, for all the girls will want to please him."

With these words Gumper turned to go. "Tomorrow," cried Stasi after him, "I will come over to your house, and speak to your daughter, and then we will go to Bischweiler." Gumper looked at her aghast, remained silent for a few minutes, and then said, "Stasi, I was mistaken in you. Humph ! I understand."

"Good morning, Gumper !" said Stasi, as she entered the room : "good morning, my child,—so early, and alone too ?"

"Why, who should come with me just from my mother's house to yours ?"

"And did you meet nobody ?" said Gumper significantly.

"Oh yes," she replied, somewhat embarrassed. "Monsieur Marceau and Dr. Marcet visited us yesterday evening. He asked after Adalbert, and when

I told him that he would not be back for the next eighteen months he was very sorry."

"Did he talk much to you?"

"To my mother: I went in and out, and you know very well that I don't talk much, especially to strangers."

"Well, I dare say you looked at him all the more." Stasi affected not to hear, and inquired after his daughter by a mute gesture. Gumper silently pointed towards the bedchamber, and Stasi went in.

Marzolf and the Doctor, a young widower, had been paying an early visit in Gumper's village: they were returning homewards when Stasi met them. At the sight of her Marzolf started, and fixed his eyes upon her in a manner that would have been dangerous to any girl of eighteen. But Stasi looked bashfully on the ground and went on her way.

"That girl," said Marzolf to his companion in French, "is very unlike the rest here: she is modest and retiring, while the others are only too happy to listen to flattery. Indeed, poor things, it is my chief amusement to lure them: at a sign they come by scores, and very handsome girls too upon my word,

who would make *furor* if they were dressed in the fashion."

"No doubt," replied the Doctor, "so long as they were silent."

"Pooh! one kisses them and then they can't talk."

"Certainly that is the surest way to make a woman hold her tongue. As for me my wife was from Strasburg, but if I marry again, it shall be a country girl: they have no pretensions to anything, don't even want to be loved, never think of being jealous, and look after the housekeeping of their own accord."

"I am by no means so sure of that," replied Marzolf. "Girls are always girls, and all women are alike; and when the passions you have mentioned do show themselves in country-girls, they are coarser, more unrestrained, and accordingly more troublesome. As far as I am concerned, I like them because one need not make any ceremony with them. They surrender at discretion with such cheerful goodwill, as though they had not a suspicion of any danger either for body or soul."

"Beware," answered the Doctor, "that you do not fall into a trap. A town-bred girl, when for-

saken by her lover, has too much pride to display her grief, and never totally forgets decorum. Our country wenches, on the contrary, stick like burrs : they are bold enough to run after you to the world's end ; and should one of them have a right upon your love, that has parents or brothers, knives and pistols are apt to come into play : you must know that as well as I."

"Well ! one can only be young once : one must take all the pleasure one can get."

"And then ?" inquired the Doctor.

"Then"—answered Marzolf with a loud laugh—"may I ask, Monsieur Benoit, how long you studied medicine ?"

"Six years."

"And were you never in love with any girl ?"

"I loved my wife before I married her."

"How long ?"

"Six years."

"You are a most estimable man," said Marzolf ironically ; "and if I had a sister, I should beg you to become my brother-in-law : and were you never bored ?"

"I was studying."

"Oh ! you studied and loved at the same time,—

c'est une autre affaire. But I dare say your wife was very romantic,—excuse me for asking: surely she must sometimes have dreamt with you, must have—what shall I say—forgotten all but your love.”

“My wife was a good girl; she loved me, but she was virtuous: nay more, I should have despised myself, had I ever spoken a word to her which could have caused her to blush.”

“Why you are a perfect Joseph! I am sure I envy you, and I wish that girl who passed just such a man for a husband.”

“Indeed she deserves it,” answered the Doctor somewhat complacently; “she is a virtuous and a modest girl.”

“Pooh, pooh! virtuous! wait till she is tried. Suppose, Doctor, that that girl were one day to lose her wits?”

“God forbid!”

“Do not interrupt me. Suppose, I say, she were to fall in love with you,—that in a fit of romantic passion she were to throw herself into your arms; for, Doctor, girls are subject to those sort of attacks, I can tell you. Suppose she were to say to you,

‘Dear Doctor, my angel, my hope, my life, my beloved, I love you! you are my only hope, my only life. I will sacrifice everything I possess to you, though when I have sacrificed myself, nothing remains to me but misery, shame and disgrace.’ And, Doctor, I can tell you there are such girls. Now if by moonlight, in such a grove as this, a girl of this kind were to embrace you as I have described, with glowing cheeks and melting eyes—if the modest, timid creature were to forget her shyness, and—tell me the truth, Doctor, what should you do?”

“Such a case,” said the Doctor, taking a pinch of snuff, “is as rare as catalepsy. Either the girl is a good-for-nothing flirt, or she is in the delirium of fever: in the first case I should despise her, in the second I should bleed her.”

“Then, Doctor, you never were twenty, nor looked into flashing black eyes or melting blue ones. Besides your wife was ugly.”

“I admired her. And what would you do?” he asked, as they entered the village.

“What I have done before. When I am a widower we will touch upon this chapter again.


Adieu ! I hope you will come and see me often, for you are a very pattern of virtue." So saying he went toward his home, and left the Doctor alone.

Several months of the summer passed away, during which Marzolf and the Doctor were much together : the latter flattered himself with the hope that he should be able somewhat to reform the dissolute young man ; but meanwhile he unconsciously learnt several things from this favourite of fortune.

Marzolf was the only son of one of the richest peasants of Alsatia, who on Sunday evenings, when he was a little tipsy, used to boast that neither God nor the king of France could ruin him. Nor was he altogether wrong. For what mattered it to him whether his broad acres, which were all let to farmers well to do in the world, bore good crops or no ? He feared neither famine, nor inundation, nor war ; for nothing could take away his land. And accordingly his darling Marzolf was to be a great man, greater than the judge of the peace or the president of the tribunal : he was to be a deputy—

what should prevent it ? The whole country round held land under him ; the parsons can be bribed, and then Marzolf was so clever, and might be made an advocate any day if necessary, for his education had cost twenty thousand francs. But Monsieur Marceau was of another mind : his ambition went no further than to enjoy his youth, without thought of the future. For the present he was well amused at Sesenheim, where every body admired and courted him. After his father's death, thought he, he might go where he pleased : for the present he would comply with the wishes of his parents, who liked to have him with them. Meanwhile he made excursions almost every week to Strasburg, where he had plenty of friends and acquaintances.

For the moment he had fixed his attention upon Stasi. He often visited her mother, and gossiped with her like an old woman, without taking any notice of Stasi. He was welcome to all except old Gumper, who clearly saw his object. "He or I," said he to Amic, "must quit your house ; but if he chooses to marry Stasi, I will remain your friend. As to Stasi's consent, I'll answer for that," added



he sarcastically. Hereupon Amie gave Marzolf to understand that people took notice of his coming to her house so often, that they wondered why such a rich fine gentleman should try to please a poor girl, that her daughter might easily get ill-spoken of by his means, and that he was still too young to marry at all, and too rich to marry her. Marzolf bit his lip, wondered how the old woman came by so much tact, and dawdled home after making a host of apologies.

But his visits had not been in vain. Stasi blushed whenever her mother mentioned him, and a blush has great meaning in a girl like Stasi. Moreover she had paraded her new gown in church, a thing which she had never done before ; and during the course of the day she fetched water six or seven times from Marzolf's well, which also she had never done before : she sometimes forgot her prayers, and that she had certainly never done before : lastly her eyes involuntarily dwelt upon him when they met in church. With all this, however, she did not herself know that she loved him ; for love is like the stomach,—no sooner is one conscious of it, than one is

already ill. No one but old Gumper guessed how it stood with her, and he endeavoured as much as possible to stem the current of her feelings. "Stasi," said he, "my daughter wants to come and stay a few weeks with you ; are you willing to receive her ?"

"With all my heart," answered she. This answer somewhat allayed his suspicions. But presently she said to him, "Do you know how mother sent Monsieur Marceau about his business ?—a good-for-nothing fellow who makes love to all the girls ; I am glad that he does not come to our house any more."

"Indeed !" said Gumper, laying his hand upon her head, and looking her steadily in the face ; "that is my doing ; it was I who packed him off. However I believe that this is your first lie."

Stasi, as though she feared that he had read her secret in her eyes, grew red and white by turns. At length she bounded like a fawn into her mother's room. "Mother," said she, "Gumper calls me a liar : he will have it that I am vexed because Marzolf does not come to our house any more." And, angered by the thought, she added, "Do you know, Gumper, that it is not at all right of you. What harm has

Marzolf done you? He does not choose that you should lord it over us all, and there he is right. He once said that the Jew Gumper had made himself our master, and that he went about the village and told people that we were in love with one another, and that it was all Gumper's fault, and that he carried misfortune into every house that he entered." Stasi burst into tears, and Gumper stood aghast.

"How!" said he at last, "have you gone so far as that with him already? As I live then, Marzolf shall have his own way for me. I wish I may break both legs before ever I cross your threshold again, any more than his. But I cannot help being sorry for you, because your poor father loved you so dearly. Truly when a father dies his children ought to be laid in the grave with him." And Gumper went.

"Gumper!" called Amie after him.

"Let him go," said Stasi: "he fancies that he does us an honour in coming near us, but we can live very well without him."

"But you don't know how much your poor father thought of him," replied Amie; and she ran to the window and again called after him, "Gumper!"

Just at that moment Marzolf and the Doctor were going past the house.

“ Why what is the matter, Gumper ?” asked the Doctor ; “ what has happened between you and your dear Amie ?”

“ *Ma foi*,” answered the Jew, “ nothing about nothing, which makes two nothings. But two farthings will make a greater clatter in a box than if it were full of gold pieces :” so saying he glanced at Marzolf. The Doctor laughed, and Gumper disappeared round the corner of the street.

If, courteous reader, you were ever in a spinning-room in Alsatia, you will freely own that the people of the country know how to give parties. You will find neither pomp nor splendour, neither silver nor gold, neither handsome drawing-rooms nor rich furniture ; but instead of all this, hospitality, frankness, good-humour and unconstrained mirth, joined with industry.

In the evening, when the angelus has been tolled, from a dozen to four-and-twenty girls assemble in the house of one of their playmates. They usually

take it by turns to receive. But they do not drive up to the door, not they: their suite precedes them, —namely the distaff richly ornamented with ribbons and tinsel, for even here vanity plays her part. Their dresses are plain, but neat as wax: the folds of the clean white shift shine forth like alabaster from under the red or variegated boddice: the hair lies smooth upon the forehead and is covered by a pointed cap, shaped like a Phrygian bonnet, and richly adorned with silver or even gold lace. The white throat is encircled by a black velvet ribbon, upon which hangs a golden cross, or some such love-token. The room in which our ladies meet is brilliantly lighted, though neither with gas nor wax-lights, but with splinters of fir, blazing in a small open chimney immediately above the stove, and which cast the most picturesque lights and shadows upon the blooming faces of the spinning girls. It is a true Flemish picture, and worthy of the pencil of the greatest master. The middle of the room is usually occupied by a table, around which the girls seat themselves, and give free course to their spindles and their tongues.

And thus they go on until eight o'clock in the

evening, without a moment's weariness, and then supper is served. By this meal ~~no~~ confectioner ever made a farthing—that I can safely swear. It generally consists of fresh sauerkraut, potatoes and dried fruits; to this sometimes is added salt meat, fetched out of the chimney, and served and eaten raw, with the accompaniment of a glass of good wine; and all this is swallowed with such an appetite, that it is a pleasure to behold.

At eight o'clock the lads, as they are called, come in: each with a respectful gesture, *chapeau bas*, pulls his bow and takes up his position behind the girl of his choice, like a true cavalier. If a girl is left without a gallant, she quits the circle and seats herself beside the hostess, who may never accept an adorer. At length the concert begins, and is entirely improvised. One of the men proposes that the party should sing a newly written song, of which he sings a few strophes as a sample. If it is approved, it is instantly learned by heart and sung the whole evening. The girls who have the best voices sing the soprano parts, and the men, whether tenors or baritone, sing the bass. Usually however the men im-

provise, to the terror of the girls. The following verses are sung as an introduction :—

— “ We spin, while we sing,
Hemp, flax and linen,
Of some wonderful thing
We sing while we spin.

“ O sing again before us,
O let us hear your song ;
So sweetly sound in chorus
Your voices clear and strong.”

Number three is now called upon. Number three gets up and improvises a rule, as he says, but which he in fact composed long ago, and has often made use of before :—

“ Our song is of the land
That to us freedom gave ;
God save our Fatherland,
The country of the brave !”

“ Bring out your wine, master host !” and the bottle goes round to the health of the Fatherland.

“ Number four !” But number four is a girl that cannot sing. “ Now then the cavalier number five !”

But number five cannot improvise. Then a voice suddenly cries "Charivari!" and is answered by "Hurrah!"

"Let the spindle whirr,
And the old cat purr."

Then Miaw! Hola! Ho! *En sus! En sus!* and so on, like the tower of Babel. If the charivaried couple is discreet, the storm soon blows over; but if the gentleman cannot take a joke, it not unfrequently ends in a fight. Accordingly, when the lads come in, they are frequently greeted with "*Messieurs, sans charivari.*" Any girl who is so unlucky as to be greeted with this discordant serenade, must instantly quit the circle and take her place beside the hostess; each however has the choice of leaving it before the game begins. In this manner it continues till the time comes to redeem all the forfeits. Often too a lover serenades his mistress with the accompaniment of the Tamtam and the firing of a pistol. When the clock strikes ten the party breaks up, and each gentleman is so polite as to light his partner to her home, where he receives an appointment for the following evening; but he does nothing without a re-

compense, neither are our Alsatian goddesses altogether unmoved by the prayers of their worshippers.

Meanwhile something quite new had happened in Sesenheim, which gave the girls a fresh subject for gossip. Marzolf's cousin, Mademoiselle Coton, came home from school at Strasburg. In former days she had been plain Kate, but now her name was changed into Coton, and it was clear that her parents intended to show her off, in imitation and rivalry of Marzolf's. Kate was indeed passing fair to look upon; she was tall and well shaped, with eyes like an eagle's, lips like a cherry, cheeks like a rose, and hair as black as any raven; moreover she was very rich,—altogether a tempting morsel. On the other hand, she was as insipid as tea, as vain as a peacock, as haughty as a swan, and as tedious as a prayer-book. These latter qualities however were unperceived by the Doctor, who before the end of the first week was desperately in love with her, to the delight of Marzolf, who did nothing but twit his poor friend with his passion. Kate now held a spinning-room on a grand footing; for every village has its aristocracy, and in Kate's spinning-room I should

not have been surprised to hear the guests talking French, or singing from printed notes. Stasi, who had been an early playmate of Kate's, went several times to visit her, and at Kate's house she met Monsieur Marceau, at whose suggestion she too was asked to the spinning-room. If Stasi's mother ever found fault with her darling daughter for being too much in Marzolf's company, the girl assured her that she could not endure him, and that there was no danger of her talking to him, though he did tell such beautiful stories. That she did not talk much to him was true enough; she felt his superiority to herself far too much for that, and could do nothing but look at him, for which she had at length found courage enough. This shrinking, which Marzolf took for indifference, served but to inflame his passion, and he resolved that he would be loved by her even though it should cost him his freedom.

"Good evening, Doctor!" said Marzolf, as the two young men met outside the room, in which some of the girls were already assembled. "Well, how do you get on with Kate? You are too timid; you cannot be bold enough with women. Suppose even they are

offended, the hurry of the passions and boundless love will excuse anything : the only misfortune is, that you have to deal with one who is only half a woman, who thinks to unite perfect love and perfect virtue like your late wife. But, Doctor, never despair ; I will help you, and you know I have some influence with Kate."

" How now, Mr. Deputy *in spe* !" replied the physician somewhat impatiently : " the humble peasant-girl Stasi, whom you have pursued so long, does not seem to dread your attacks ; and unless you marry her, she will never love you as you wish to be loved, at least so I am told."

" What will you bet," answered Marzolf, " that she shall be mine, mine body and soul, and that before marriage ? You talk of nothing but marrying ; who the deuce can marry all the girls ? Excuse me, Doctor, but you are a fool, a fool on the subject of virtue. In love there is no anatomy, and therefore you know nothing about it. Stasi will be mine before Kate thinks of you, and Kate's turn will come next ; for I shall have ended before you have begun." With these words they entered the room.

To the great annoyance of the Doctor, Kate as

hostess could not accept a swain, and Marzolf requested him aloud to take his place behind Stasi. The poor girl blushed crimson; every one looked at her, and read in her blush the confirmation of Marzolf's word. At length she plucked up a heart, and rashly and angrily exclaimed, "Who gave you a right, Marzolf, to call me yours? I did not appoint you. Go back to Nancy, to your basket-maker's girl, whom you can truly call yours. Do you want to deceive me as you deceived her? You are a bad, heartless man." Hereupon her voice was choked with sobs. But she had already said far too much. All who were present were startled by her words, only the Doctor secretly rejoiced at them. Marzolf fixed his eyes upon the ground without moving a muscle of his countenance, and only muttered between his teeth, "That accursed Gumper!" But a cruel thought flashed through his mind,—“You love me,” said he to himself, “and you are lost!”

Meanwhile the Doctor drew near the weeping girl, and tried to comfort her, though he kept his eyes fixed upon Kate all the time. She meanwhile made excuses for her cousin Marzolf, and laughed at the

touchiness of the village girls. At length Marzolf said, "Let her alone; she is right; I have offended her, and I now entreat her to forgive me." At these words the poor girl looked up in Marzolf's face so sweetly with her blue eyes, that for a moment he was almost shaken in his resolution. "Oh she certainly loves me," thought he, "and she is worth more than all the rest of the company put together." He came to her side; she was about to address him, but Marzolf laid his hand gently upon her mouth. "Oh do not speak," said he, "you have already said enough. I do not ask you to be mine, for I am a good-for-nothing fellow, and you are an angel. But as to the story of the basket-maker's daughter, that is an invention of old Gumper, who hates me. Whenever he comes in my way I will call him to account." "Cousin," said he turning to Kate, "bring me a good glass of wine, I am thirsty." Wine was brought, and after hastily swallowing several glasses, one after another, Marzolf exclaimed, "Here's to the health of the prettiest girl!" Kate looked at herself in the glass, and the others looked on the ground, and his uncle asked, "And who is she?" "Oh," answered Marzolf, "*chacun*

a son gout,—ask the Doctor, he knows best.” The Doctor turned pale and looked at Kate. “Out with it!” shouted Marzolf, who had gulped down one glass of wine after another to drown his vexation: “can’t you see by broad daylight? don’t you perceive what a fine opportunity I made for you?”

“Monsieur Marceau,” replied the Doctor at length, “you know that I am in love, and that love is blind,” and he pulled up his cravat, perfectly satisfied with this well-turned answer. But Marzolf was not so easily put down, and he was determined to throw the Doctor from one embarrassment into another. “And I,” said he, with a significant glance at Stasi, “I am not in love, and nevertheless I maintain that pale cheeks are quite as handsome as rosy ones.”

“No doubt,” retorted Kate, “the basket-maker’s daughter was pale.”

Marzolf swallowed another glass of wine, and Stasi secretly reproached herself with her indiscretion. “She was pale,” replied Marzolf with flashing eyes, “but by heaven you shall be paler one day.”

“Not for your sake I hope,” exclaimed the Doctor, “you insolent fellow!”

"Ah ha!" cried Marzolf, avoiding the Doctor's thrust like an eel, "are you there, you rogue? So, my dear Kate, I congratulate you."

"Sir," said the Doctor, who could not take a joke, "you carry your jest too far. What business is it of yours whether I love Kate or no? are you her father? have you a right over her?"

"Unquestionably I have," replied Marzolf; "Kate is my cousin, and I love her." And so saying, he stroked his cousin with his white hands, and she bore it very complacently.

"Yes, yes," said the old man, "Marzolf is my nephew, and if he likes to have my girl she is his: is it not so, Kate?" Kate looked at Marzolf, but he was narrowly watching Stasi in order to assure himself of her feelings.

"Very well," said the Doctor, "very well, I have no objection; but in that case you really must not pursue poor Stasi, or I shall say as she did, you are a heartless bad man."

"I am not obliged to bear those words from you, Sir, because I bore them from Stasi," cried Marzolf angrily; and snatching up a bottle, he rushed upon

the Doctor, but Kate and her father held him back. "The devil!" cried Marzolf, "let me go; and you, Doctor, repeat those words if you dare." He tore himself from their grasp, and had already seized the poor Doctor by the throat, when Stasi jumped up, and clasped Marzolf tightly in her arms as she tried to drag him away from the Doctor.

"Monsieur Marceau, you shall not fight with any body on my account—no, Monsieur Marceau. Jesus and Mary!" cried Stasi, as Marzolf fell back pale and senseless in her arms. "Water!" and she fell with him to the ground. Marzolf was in a fainting-fit, which did not however last above two minutes. Wine, anger, and the heat of the room together had upset him; but he quickly recovered, to the joy of all present, especially of the Doctor. Stasi got up and returned to her place in evident emotion. For a few minutes all were silent. The Doctor was putting his neckcloth to rights again, when the door opened, and three peasants came in one after another. For about a minute all the people in the room stared, and then burst into a loud laugh, which seemed as if it would never cease: and no wonder. The first of these

three peasants was the village watchman ; he wore a three-cornered hat, with the brims falling down, and had a pair of mustachios made of soot, and his face well rouged with red ochre. He was dressed in a white linen smock-frock, and carried a pike, the shaft of which was formed by the broomstick of his better half. You must know that some people had heard the noise in the house, and had gone to the watch-house, which was about fifty steps off, with the news that at Gressian's house blood was running about the room, and that the Doctor had stabbed Marzolf with a lancet. The watchman was as usual fast asleep by eight o'clock in the evening, and the two villagers, whose turn it was to keep watch with him, had painted him as we have described. "In the name of the law !" said he at length, rubbing his eyes and covering his hands with red ochre. "In the name of the law," replied the master of the house, "I command you to drink a glass of wine in order that you may wake up. Who the devil sent you hither?"

"Why, we knew very well," replied the other two, "that your wine was good."

"You are heartily welcome," said the host, who

hoped that the arrival of these guests would put an end to the quarrel. "Why, Michael! did you fly down the chimney with the gentlemen? just look at yourself in the glass." Michael was not a little surprised when he saw his face, but he took the affair in good part, for he knew his own weak side. "When a man has served as long as I—" said he in French. "Why where did you serve?" asked the host, although he knew it all before.

"Under General Chounot (Junot) for twelve years."

"Well, take another glass, and sing us one of your songs."

Michael did not wait to be asked twice. He first drank "*à la santé de toute la compagnie!*" and then began to sing, "*C'est l'amour l'amour l'amour l'amour l'amour.*"

"There, that is enough *amour*."

"No, *pardon*, one never has enough *amour*,—*c'est l'amour l'amour qui fait le monde à la ronde, à la ronde*—mark you, *à la ronde et chaque jour à son tour le monde fait l'amour le monde fait l'amour, oui tout le monde aime l'amour*. Enough, enough, in the name of the law I will depart," said the watchman

solemnly. "I must go and cry ten o'clock. Ladies and gentlemen, *au revoir* !

No sooner was he gone, than the party broke up in silence, while our friend Michael was blowing his horn lustily.

I know not whether the fainting-fit of Marzolf, who had far more energy than strength, was real or feigned. In either case however he made use of it as a pretext for taking leave of Kate, and walking home with Stasi. As Stasi's house was so near, they made a circuit outside the village, in order to get into the yard through Stasi's garden.

"You hate me," said Marzolf to her; "I did not expect that. I knew very well that I was indifferent to you, but I really have not deserved your hate."

Stasi made no answer, but wiped her eyes and sobbed violently. They had just reached the barn, through which she had to pass. Stasi dropped her distaff. "I hate you?" cried she, throwing her fair arms round his neck. Terrified at her own boldness, she sank down upon a bundle of straw that lay in the barn.

"Stasi ! my Stasi !" cried Marzolf, really somewhat

touched, "I cannot yet believe you. Perhaps you think to marry me, for you know not how I wish to be loved. Many girls already have loved me as they said, but I love only—"

At this moment a figure appeared at the back of the barn. Marzolf started, and Stasi clung to him without uttering a sound. The figure came nearer with upraised hands. Marzolf jumped up and advanced to meet it. "Go to the devil!" cried the new comer at length; "miserable seducer, was not Melanie enough for you? Be off, or I will cry fire and murder, so as to raise the whole neighbourhood."

"We will soon see that, you old cheat," said Marzolf who meanwhile had recovered himself, and seized the half-naked Gumper by the throat.

Stasi now jumped up. "Let him go," cried she; "it is Gumper, who often sleeps in our barn: let him go for God's sake!" Marzolf let him go, and Gumper began to cry with might and main, "Fire! murder!" Stasi, afraid that there would be an uproar, slunk away into her bedroom. Marzolf jumped over the hedge, and darted like an arrow down the road.

Here the watchman stopped him, and asked, "Where is the fire; are you running to fetch the engine?"

"Yes, yes," answered he, "don't hinder me."

"Fire, fire!" roared the watchman with his stentorian voice; and he jumped over the churchyard wall, ran to the schoolmaster's house, fetched the keys of the church and began to toll the bell.

"Where is it?" cried the people out of all the windows; "there are no flames to be seen." "Oh you will soon see them," answered some one else; "don't you smell the smoke?"

Meanwhile Gumper had thrown Stasi's distaff into her room, and ran into the court to silence the people who were crying fire. There he met Marzolf with a bucket.

"Bravo!" said he to him, "you are come to quench the flames. That is where they burn though," said he, tapping him on the breast. "But hush! if you will hold your tongue I will hold mine, and the watchman must pay for all."

"Get along home!" cried Marzolf to the assembled crowd; "it is a false alarm, got up by that drunk fellow Michael." At this moment Michael

came back, and the valiant hero met with a fine reception. The lads of the village set him astride upon a thick pole, and carried him home in triumph, from time to time throwing him up into the air, and catching him on the pole again. "House a-fire, Michael!" cried they—"Fire!" and thus they heaped a thousand sarcasms on him, till they had arrived at his own home, where however they treated him to a bottle of wine, which made up for all.

But how came Gumper in the barn? He had lost his watch-key the evening before, and as he had to make a bargain for cattle early the next morning, he crept into the hay in Amie's barn, that he might be sure not to oversleep himself.

This was nothing new to Gumper; and as to the hay, I can assure my elegant readers that one sleeps much better on that than on a featherbed, except when a marten or a weasel runs over one's face, the former to steal the chickens, and the latter to suck their eggs.

Next morning Barbara told Gertrude that Amie's barn was haunted, and that the whole village was greatly beholden to Marzolf, who came running with a ladder, and who was so much more ready and sooner

on the spot than all the village lads. "Yes," replied the other, "and Stasi is prouder than ever since he has talked to her so much. As for the barn being haunted, that is either a sign of luck, which would be if he married her, or—you know what, Bab. Well, we will go tomorrow to old Lena the wise woman—she can tell us the rights of it."

The intercourse between Marzolf and Stasi became more tender every day, and Marzolf, who knew himself less well than any one else did, really fancied that he loved her. But a fresh object of desire soon drew him from her. The blooming Kate, jealous of Stasi's happiness, displayed all her attractions in order to entice him into her snares. The poor Doctor and his love were suddenly dismissed, and Marzolf was invited to join her in an excursion to Strasburg.

Doubtless it is an immense pleasure for a young Miss, but just escaped from boarding-school, to show herself in all the glory of undisputed power over a handsome gentleman, to make up for her former submission by double pride, and to ask her mistress for advice with an air of condescension. Kate was determined to enjoy this pleasure in full perfection, and she

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accordingly chose her cousin Marceau as her companion and lover. Stasi saw them set off: she saw Marzolf, now *her* Marzolf, lift Kate into the carriage, and seat himself beside her; but she only trusted his love all the more when he threw her a glance in passing. Meanwhile fourteen long days and nights passed away, and they did not return. Stasi had fearful dreams, but she no longer told them to her mother. She could not confess all to her, so she shut herself up in silence, and wept in secret. She now felt the want of her friend Gumper, her second father, whom she ought to have obeyed. At length the pair of cousins came home, when all their money was gone. Marzolf thought Stasi very pale, and when she embraced him she thought him very cold. "Marzolf," said she, "you no longer love me; you never loved me; you have deceived me!" and she burst into tears.

"You know," replied he, "that I cannot endure your tears any more than your jealousy."

"Will you come to me this evening?" she asked with brimming eyes, "I have much to say to you."

Marzolf promised that he would, in order to get.

away. What had she to say to him?—what has not a fond girl to say to her lover? When evening came, however, Marzolf had not much time. He was in a hurry to visit his cousin; for both girls now had the same rights upon him—the same rights!

Spring came on apace, to the great regret of all the gossips in the village, who had had plenty of occupation for the whole winter. One thought Stasi too pale, and another found Kate too red; a third even hinted at a slip, and Marzolf himself did not escape, although he was no longer at all proud, and had a civil word for almost every girl he met. Then they fell upon the Doctor, who they said knew so little about a girl's pulse, and trusted so much to her tongue. At last, they even attacked old Gumper, who had not appeared in the village for the last three weeks, and was entirely occupied with all paternal zeal in marrying his unfortunate daughter. No sooner was this accomplished, than he returned to Sesenheim, drest out like a young dandy: he had been forced to buy a new coat for his daughter's wedding, and the old red jacket had been dismissed. Moreover he now carried no wallet across his shoulder, for fear of

spoiling the collar of his coat. Like a true Frenchman, he had taken to dress when all his money was gone; for he had given his whole property to his daughter in order to get her married. Nothing was left to him but his cottage, in which to spend the remainder of his days alone. His first walk was past Stasi's house, in order to show himself, or perhaps even to go in; for it made him perfectly miserable to be no longer able to talk his fill with his Amie. As he went past the house, he thought he saw a hand beckon to him from beneath the window-curtain, and he accordingly stood still. Presently Amie herself came to the window, and made him a sign to come to her. He did not wait to be asked twice, but stepped into the room.

"My dear Gumper," said Amie, "how many things have changed since you were last here!"

Gumper nodded assent.

"Your daughter is married?"

"Yes, Amie, but her father is now as poor as he was twenty years ago, as at the time when I came here from the army with your husband."

"And O my poor Stasi!" cried she.

"I know it all," answered the old man. "I am sorry for the girl, for she has the best of hearts."

"But have you heard that Marzolf is going to marry Kate?"

"That would be shameful," exclaimed he in a loud voice.

"Hush, Gumper! Stasi is asleep; she has cried so long that she has cried herself to sleep."

"I must know the truth of this at once," cried he, and left the room. In a quarter of an hour he came back, but all his good-humour was gone. "Yes, Amie," said he mournfully, "Marzolf's mother has just told me that her son was betrothed to his cousin yesterday evening. Kate's father went three evenings in succession to old Marzolf, and threatened him—his own brother—with the knife, if he did not force his son to marry his cousin. There is something behind that, depend upon it."

At this moment Stasi rose from her bed in the alcove, and stepped into the room like a sleep-walker. She dragged herself along towards Gumper, fell her full length upon the floor, as if struck by lightning, and clasped his knees with the wildness of de-

spair, exclaiming in a broken voice, "Save me, Gumper! save me! I have neither mother nor brother left! I am lost! Oh!"

"Jesus, Mary and Joseph!" cried Amie, clasping her hands above her head, "my Stasi is dishonoured; I have long feared it. Gumper," cried she, throwing her arms round his neck, "my Stasi, my child is dishonoured, and Marzolf is betrothed to another!"

"Don't cry out so loud," said Gumper, bolting the door: "neither Jesus, Mary nor Joseph can help it now.—Be silent, Amie," said he in an authoritative tone. "Did you ever hear me cry out: weep as much as you will, but don't shout so. Do you want the whole village to know it directly? First help me to carry your unfortunate daughter back to her bed, and then I will go to Kate's mother, who is a good honest woman, that fears God, and will never give her daughter to such a good-for-nothing fellow as Marzolf, especially when she hears that Stasi has rights upon him. I am going, Amie; but mind, if you say a single harsh word to your daughter, I will never set foot in your house again."

Meanwhile Gumper went to the Doctor, and sent

him to Stasi: he then proceeded to the house of Kate's parents. He found Kate's mother sitting by the oven peeling potatoes, for the town-bred girl could never condescend to help in the household.

"How now?" said she at the sight of Gumper—"how now? here is a rare visitor. Are you come to wish me joy upon Kate's marriage, old Gumper? Sit down beside me: and how do you do?"

Gumper sat down. "Barbara," said he at length, "I have something important to say to you. Are we alone?"

"To be sure we are, Gumper. What is the matter now?"

"I know very well, Barbara," replied he, "that you are upright, and fear the Lord, and that you have never injured any one: I therefore wonder how you can give your daughter to so bad a man. Stasi, Amie's child, is about to become a mother by him."

Barbara turned pale, and let her knife drop. "What do you tell me?" said she at last: "what is it you tell me, Gumper? Stasi!—Dear, dear, dear!" She sat for a few minutes in silence, with her head

sunk upon her breast. "Gumper," said she at length, "you are a worthy man, and I had better tell you all:" and she whispered something, which worked upon the old Jew like a thunderbolt. He shoved back his chair, convulsively drew up one leg, and stared stupidly and aghast at Barbara. "Yes, yes, Gumper," she went on, "I and my old man would have been far too proud to force our daughter upon Marzolf, but it cannot be helped now. My old man would have stabbed his own brother, if this scoundrel had refused to make an honest woman of our daughter. No one knows anything about it, and I think the wedding will take place in a few days. And so Stasi, the pious Stasi—she too!"

"Hush, Barbara!" interrupted Gumper angrily, "it is all your Kate's fault. Do you suppose that Stasi will be silent? Your Kate has a father, but Stasi has a brother too. Mind you, Barbara, before evening the whole village will know it."

"And what can we do, Gumper?" asked she. "What is to be done?"

"Why," replied he, "I do not know what can be done, unless Marzolf will own Stasi's child, de-

clare it legitimate, and give it equal rights with those of your daughter."

"That will never be done," replied the old woman ;
"I know Marzolf and Kate too well."

"We mortals," replied Gumper, rising to go, "do not know what will happen and what will not. Within a year much may fall out which we cannot foresee. Well, God be with you, Barbara ! if you want a god-father, here comes the Doctor." Barbara shut the door after him, and Gumper and the Doctor talked for some time before they went back to Stasi's house.

Many a secret tear had been shed in the village of Sesenheim, and many a girl, after the first malicious pleasure was over, pitied poor Stasi. But mankind soon gets accustomed to anything, and bears misfortune better than too much prosperity. Stasi's mother, who at first was so ill that she kept her bed, recovered by degrees, and the poor girl herself fell into such a state of apathy, that she never answered any one that spoke to her, not even her best friends. Gumper was the only exception. She poured out her whole heart to him ; and every time he left her, she asked his forgiveness afresh. Gumper never comforted

her with words, or endeavoured to make excuses for her ; but he seemed, so to speak, to suffer with her, and to feel all the tortures of despised love even more than he had done with his own daughter. By degrees he brought her once more to read the Bible to her mother, and chose the story of Ruth for her the first time she did so. At length, when Marzolf's marriage with Kate was to take place, he proposed to her to go home with him to his daughter's house, and to stay there till after her lying-in. Stasi, who had not gone outside her own door for many months, gratefully accepted this offer, the more so as she was glad to spare her mother the trouble and grief which the birth of an illegitimate grandchild must cause her. Gumper's daughter was none of those so-called strict women, who, after making one slip themselves, think every other inexcusable, and are less indulgent than anybody else. "Nay," say they, "we best know what is suffered ;" but they forget that a stone that has been through the fire is always the hardest ; whereas the heroines of virtue at eighteen are like soldiers who wear epaulettes and mustachios without having ever seen a battle. Strange ! that women

should ever be least indulgent towards the most unfortunate of their own sex. What,—is a girl who loves and falls a victim to her tenderness less honest than one who sells her youthful charms to a rich old hunk for a few thousands and a wedding-ring? And yet you shall see the latter strutting proudly about, while the former despairs in her lonely chamber, and is covered with a disgrace which was unknown in the old world. Oh! pity these victims of society, instead of overwhelming them with infamy and scorn: ye have used these iniquitous weapons for centuries without lessening the evil a jot.

Stasi resolved to go home with Gumper as soon as it was dusk, and he meanwhile found a girl to wait upon her mother during her own absence.

On their way they passed through the wood in which Stasi had met Marzolf for the first time. At a turn of the footpath Stasi suddenly sprang behind a large oak, and in an instant Marzolf stood before Gumper with a double-barrelled gun in his hand. For several weeks past Marzolf had been seldom at home, and had spent most of his days in wandering about the neighbourhood. He was now strolling gloomily

homewards; but when he caught sight of Gumper he exclaimed, "Ah, Gumper! I am glad to meet you alone. I know that you see Stasi every day—tell me, what does she say of me?"

"If you will rest your gun against the oak here, I will answer your question; but I can't parley with an armed man." Marzolf did as he was desired. "Well then," continued Gumper, "she says that you are a wicked seducer, a scoundrel, an infamous fellow, a wretched, shameless cheat, a villain."

Marzolf turned pale with anger. "Jew, you lie!" cried he: "Stasi never said that."

"Well then I say it!" shouted the indignant Gumper, who felt all the vigour of youth return to him. Marzolf seized him by the collar, but Gumper had not forgotten all his arts of defence. He clasped the slight young man with his bony arms, squeezed him till his ribs cracked, while he pressed his pointed chin upon his breast as if he would have broken him in two. This did not however last long: Marzolf soon freed himself, and flung the old man backwards upon the ground: he ran to seize his gun, when two shots were fired in quick succession.

“What was that?” cried Marzolf. “You here!” Stasi, without answering him, unfastened the belt from the gun, which had been worked and given him by her. She had snatched up the gun during the combat, and had fired it off just as Marzolf was running to seize it. Thunderstruck by her appearance, he stood before her like a criminal. Stasi cast one look of scorn upon him, and reached him his gun without the belt. Marzolf flung it down, jumped over Gumper without touching him, and disappeared. By and by the latter slowly rose, took up the gun, examined it with a critical eye, and said with a low voice, “At all events, Stasi, the gun is ours. If you have a son, and he grows old enough to carry it, he may at least shoot his father with it. All that is possible. There is nothing new under the sun, as Solomon says, save only that all my ribs are, I believe, smashed by that cursed tumble.”

A few days after this occurrence Marzolf was quietly married to Kate. Poor Kate meanwhile was totally changed. The once lively girl had become dejected under her misfortune, and was filled with religious terrors. Her maid, old Lizzy, incessantly preached

to her, and at length induced her to persuade Marzolf to reconcile himself with the Doctor. Some of our readers may ask how Marzolf treated her: he treated her neither well nor ill; he did not treat her at all, which is perhaps the very worst usage. Kate often reproached herself with having caused the ruin of poor Stasi, who was now bearing her sufferings in another village. By degrees the Doctor became her confidant, especially when her health began to fail. Marzolf was not in the least jealous, and never made her the slightest reproach. She once said to the Doctor, "Monsieur Benoit, I feel that this lying-in will be my death." The Doctor laughed at her. "Do not laugh at me," continued she, "I am certain of it, and I wish to make it up with Stasi before I die. Do you at all events mention it to old Gumper, whom she obeys as though she were his child." The Doctor did so; but Gumper said that Stasi had as far to go to Kate as Kate to come to Stasi, and that it might have evil consequences, seeing that Marzolf loved Stasi much better than his wife, and she herself had not yet forgotten him. About a fortnight after this conversation, however,

some one knocked at Gumper's door about midnight. A messenger had come to tell Gumper that Kate had given birth to a son, that she lay at the point of death, and entreated Stasi to come to her as quickly as possible. "Death," said Gumper, "breaks through all things." And off he ran to fetch Stasi away from his daughter's house, in order to take her to Sesenheim. Within an hour they were there. Stasi came to Kate's bedside, where a heart-rending scene ensued.

"Stasi," said Kate in a broken voice, "can you forgive me?" Stasi knelt by her bed, dissolved in tears, and nodded assent, for she was unable to speak.

"Will you," continued Kate, "bring up my child with your own? they have the same father: do you be mother to them both." Stasi shuddered, but answered, "Yes."

"Swear it to me upon this cross," replied Kate, slowly raising her golden cross to her lips.

"I swear it."

"Listen, Stasi!" continued she more slowly; "I am the sole heiress of my parents, but your child shall share the inheritance equally with mine. Marzolf shall be the guardian of both till they are of age.

I made a will to this effect a fortnight ago. Are you content, Stasi? Kiss me, and forgive me." Stasi bent over her, but her life had already ended, and Stasi only kissed a corpse. She started up with a shriek, and was carried away insensible.

Marzolf quitted the village immediately after the death of his wife; first sending his child to Stasi, according to Kate's dying request. His father, broken by age and sorrow, in a few weeks followed his unhappy daughter-in-law into the grave. Every one now wondered why Marzolf, who was wholly independent, did not marry the unfortunate Stasi. But no solution of their wonder appeared, and it seemed as if Marzolf never intended to come back.

One fine evening a soldier in military undress stepped proudly through the village, and stopped at Stasi's house. He knocked at the door, thinking it locked, but no one answered him. He listened, and heard the crying of little children. How! thought he, can my mother or sister have got married? for this soldier was none other than Adalbert, a subaltern

officer in the fourth regiment of hussars, who was now come home upon furlough. He knocked again, and the door opened of itself. He went in, and found no one but two lively boys lying side by side in the cradle. He felt inclined to be very angry, till one of them smiled at him as if it had known him long. He then went to the alcove, where he beheld his mother lying in bed and asleep, looking so pale and thin, that although he had not seen her for five years, he would not for the world have waked her. He again went up to the cradle, laid aside his schako, his cloak and his sword, sat down, and began to form so many different conjectures, that, tired as he was, he ended by falling asleep over them. Presently the door opened softly, and Stasi entered the room with her prayer-book in her hand. She came from church, which she now never missed. It is not easy to imagine the joy and surprise of the fond sister when she recognized her brother. She uttered a piercing shriek, which woke Adalbert out of his sleep. He jumped up, and trembling with joy embraced his sister, who now turned deadly pale. "You look strange to me," said he at last: "and so you are married!" Stasi hid her face in the curtains

of the alcove, and with horror Adalbert partly guessed the truth. "Mother!" cried he, running up to Amie and giving her kiss after kiss.

"Ah that voice!" cried she, "how it glads my heart! my son! are you come at last?" And raising herself in bed, she took his handsome head in both hands, and looked at him with pride and satisfaction. "Your mother, Adalbert," said she, "has grown fifteen years older within the last five. Alas! that there should be no perfect joy in this world. Do you know?"—Adalbert heard Stasi sobbing.

"I know enough," said he; "but do not grieve about it. Let us now rejoice that we are together safe and well: the rest will take care of itself. Do but look at me, my Stasi," said he, coaxing her; "I forgive you with all my heart, if my mother has forgiven you. And by heaven, Stasi, if you are the victim of a seducer, I will avenge you."

The mother now collected all her energies for the sake of her son. She wanted to appear strong and hearty. "I will tell you what I advise you to do, children. We should never be able to talk to each other by ourselves to-day. As soon as folks know

that you are come, Adalbert, there will be no end of visitors. I advise you therefore to walk over to Gumper's this very day. Stasi can tell you everything undisturbed on the road, and Gumper will be not a little pleased to see you. We owe him more than this I am sure."

"You are right, darling mother," replied Adalbert with feigned cheerfulness. "Come along, Stasi; we will go through the barn and round outside the village, so that nobody may see us; the evening is fine, and I am not at all tired." Stasi did as her brother desired, and they set out upon their walk, which took them two whole hours, though the village in which Gumper lived was barely two miles off. Stasi told all her grief to Adalbert, who felt considerably relieved on hearing that only one of the children was his nephew.

It was already dark when Adalbert and Stasi entered Gumper's room. The old man was not a little surprised at the sight of the tall young warrior, but he instantly recognized him, and could not find words to express his wonder at Adalbert's likeness to his father. Supper was brought, a few bottles of wine emptied, and various matters discussed, when Adal-

bert asked Gumper what was the origin of the close friendship between him and his own father.

"I will tell you all about it," said Gumper, "especially as Stasi does not yet know it."

"In the year '93 commissioners were sent from Strasburg to all the villages to raise recruits, that is, to drag off every unmarried man to the army whether he would or no. My mother, who never would hear of the outcry about patriotism—for her father had been guillotined because he kept holy a Saturday which happened not to fall upon the decadi—thought how she could save me from being made a soldier. I was already hard upon thirty, but she had so contrived it that the Maire always shut his eyes when he came to my turn. This time however nothing would do, and there was no means left but to marry me up as fast as possible. It is true that I was no longer a child, and had a will of my own; but I never disobeyed her, nor have I yet repented that I did not. After all she was my mother, and the only person that belonged to me. Accordingly I was forced to look out for some girl all in a hurry, in order to marry her out of hand. Our butcher still had a

daughter left at home who was past thirty ; to her I proposed on Sunday, and we were married on the Tuesday. But the Maire did not approve this, especially as there was no wedding-feast ; he accordingly threatened to denounce me, and my mother advised me to cross the Rhine, and to stop on the further side until this noise was over. This was hard enough, for my wife already loved me dearly, though she had been mine for only a few days. Thus I became an emigrant against my will, and that same evening I stole down to the river-side. But I got out of the frying-pan into the fire ; for the ferryman, who was a thorough-going patriot, smelt a rat, and seized upon me as a spy—as if I should be a spy ! But in those days everybody was master and slave at once. He took me to Weissenburg, ten miles from here, where General Hoche had just fought a battle against the Germans. My hour is come, thought I,—I shall be either shot or hanged. But I did not lose all my courage. Hoche was brave, and therefore good : he did not understand German himself, so he made a sign to one of his officers who spoke German to question me. That officer was your father. He made a

devil of a face at me so long as he took me for a spy; but when I told him the truth, he patted me good-humouredly on the shoulder and said, 'My good fellow, I want men, my ranks were a good deal thinned yesterday. You did not wish to serve your country, but you must now prove yourself worthy of it. If you love your mother so much, you must love your country too; you shall enter my company; and this evening you can learn to load, and tomorrow to fire. What is your name?'—'Gumper.'—'And your wife's?'—'Why truly,' said I laughing, 'I don't yet know.' He laughed too, and continued, 'I too am married, and my dear wife has got a little son at her breast, but that does not keep me from defending my country. Do you know that we are fellow-countrymen?'—'Yes, Captain, and I will be as faithful to you as if I were your brother.'—'Let me embrace you, my good Gumper;' and so he did.

"Meanwhile the tall, slender Hoche came up to us. Your father spoke to him in French, and they both laughed heartily. Now I was fairly in for it. I got a new uniform, which had been worn by several soldiers who were now killed: it was neither that of a

cavalry nor of a foot soldier, but a mixture of both. They gave me a musket, a cartridge-box and cartridges, and in the course of ten minutes they taught me to load and to fire, of which indeed I already had some idea before. Hereupon I was enrolled as a skirmisher. Next morning I received a shot in the leg, but to this day I don't know how it happened. However it was near Weissenburg where I was skirmishing,—that is to say, loading my gun, and firing it off at hap-hazard. I was carried to Weissenburg, where, thanks to your father's care, I recovered in a fortnight. Thus then on Sunday I was single, on Monday betrothed, on Tuesday married, on Wednesday a spy, on Thursday a soldier, on Friday wounded, and on Saturday nothing at all. To tell the honest truth, I was burning with desire to get back to the army. Your father made me compliment upon compliment, told me how convinced he was of my bravery and my patriotism, and thus he talked me over more and more. As I was the only man in the whole company who could speak German, I soon became his confidant. Every Sunday he sent me to his wife, your mother, upon one message or another, and in

order to see what the little boy was about, for you had not a pair of moustachios then as you have now ; and every now and then I took the opportunity to go home to my village, where I passed the night at home with my wife and mother, who were not a little frightened the first time that I walked into the room, let my gun rattle upon the floor, and made a terrible fierce face. My wife especially would not recognize me at first, but she came round by degrees, and after all what was the use of sobbing and crying ? the thing was done ; I was a soldier, and I dare say I should not have loved my wife as well had I remained a peddling Jew. As it was, I only saw her about once a month, and each time it seemed to me so new and strange that it was always a fresh pleasure. By this time I had smelt powder more than once ; your father was really satisfied with me ; I could swear in French, and had become an irreclaimable republican. At length, one day when my mother reproached me with my irreligion, I resolved within myself not to go home any more. There is nothing more dangerous for a man's morals than enthusiasm about his country : at all events, I was totally altered within the space of

six months, and had entirely forgotten my mother, my wife, and my future child, while I could rave by the hour about dying gloriously for my country. At length, when we marched to join the army in Italy, I totally forgot to take leave of my wife and mother. This, my dear children, is the only thing with which I have to reproach myself. At the end of five years I returned, and found my wife living, but not my mother. I trust she has forgiven me: I was a soldier, and a soldier is not his own master.

“Meanwhile the friendship between your father and myself increased daily. While we were in Italy he loved to talk to me of you, and I told him about my family. I could not write, and your father sent my messages home; but a letter was a great rarity, for we had but little time for writing. One day—I think it was at Marengo, when Napoleon was General—whom your father hated because he already saw what he was aiming at—your father said to me, ‘Gumper, I have a presentiment of death; if I fall, deliver the letter which I now give you.’ I laughed, and took it as a joke. ‘Gumper,’ he continued in a solemn tone, ‘do you leave the

service as soon as you can ; we are no longer fighting for our country, but for the first Consul. As far as I am concerned, I have already told you that I shall fall. If however I should not, I shall throw up my commission, at the risk of being declared a coward and a traitor. I told the General so yesterday. Do you recollect how Hoche used to talk to us ? Well, by heaven, this man may have more luck, but Hoche was a better patriot. This one speaks to such as myself like a master, whereas the other spoke like a friend ; this one flatters those whom he can turn to his own purposes,—the other did his duty as a General, and when the battle was over, he became like a common soldier. I acknowledge that Buonaparte is a great man,' he added, ' but I have seen Vesuvius vomit flames of fire. Beautiful as it was, I could not forget that it also poured forth lava. Do you understand me, Gumper ?'—' Not quite,' said I.—' Yesterday,' continued he, ' the General sent for me, and asked me if I wished for promotion. I said I did not. He went on to ask why I was always so opposed to him, though I fought so bravely. I looked steadily at him, and asked in my turn whether

there was any truth in what some of the soldiers in the army whispered among themselves, that we were raising up a tyrant over us. He turned pale, and silently made a sign to me to go, and I went. Bonaparte has turned pale before me, and I have no choice left but to shoot myself or him. I have guessed his thoughts, and know his secret. As I was saying, Gumper, if I fall, you must return home, and take the money which I now deliver to you for the maintenance of my family and of yours. Swear to me that you will do so.' I swore upon my sword, and left him in sorrow.

"No sooner had the battle begun next morning, than he rushed into the enemy's fire and fell. In my hurry I had overloaded my musket; the barrel burst, and carried away my forefinger. At this moment the enemy's cavalry charged us. Your father would have been trampled to pieces under the horses' hoofs, had I not rushed upon him and dragged him across the field into a ditch, for I saw that there was still life in him. We lay there for about an hour, till the smoke from the cannon became so thick that nothing could be seen. I then carried him upon my

back to the nearest village, where a poor woman took care of him. My finger pained me horribly, and your father, who had a ball in his side, was cured sooner than I, and came to see me in the hospital as soon as he could walk. His wound healed quickly, which was bad for him, and that he knew. Every change of weather made him ill, and the wound ended by killing him. He got, I know not how, his discharge and a pension, and when he told me of it, I felt sadder at heart than I had done when he made a soldier of me. He got me my discharge too, and we returned home together to dear old Alsatia.

“Your father gave me money to set up in trade. I never left him; but the cursed wound, and grief at seeing Napoleon emperor, brought him to his grave. It was curious enough that he was glad to see that I became religious again by degrees. ‘A man must have something to believe in,’ said he: ‘your faith, Gumper, will keep you alive; but I have nothing left but to die.’ And he did die! the bravest and the best man in Alsatia. Here’s to him!” cried Gumper, seeing Adalbert and Stasi in tears—
“Here’s to the captain of the fourth company in the

army of Mayence !” Adalbert drank, and the former indifferent conversation was resumed.

About this time there was a feast given in Sesenheim to the whole village ; for there was a wedding in the course of the same week as the fair, and a famous merry-making it was. For days beforehand all the shops in which ribbons and artificial flowers were sold, were regularly besieged ; for the lads wanted to ride to meet the bridegroom. The custom is to assemble at the house of the groomsman, where all who can find horses mount, and ride to fetch the bridegroom from the neighbouring village. The cavalcade is headed by a strawman and a leafman, that is to say, one of them after mounting is enveloped in a sheaf of straw, and another in a bundle of leaves, so completely, that it seems as though a living wheat-sheaf or a moveable bush were journeying along ; for even their heads are completely covered with the straw or the leaves, taking care only that the air should not be excluded. These are followed by the groomsman, gaily decked with ribbons and artificial

flowers. Then come the gallant horsemen adorned with scarfs, and lastly a waggon, in which is a band of music and all the unmounted guests. When they meet the bridegroom and his train, who are going to fetch the bride to church, the music strikes up, pistols are fired off, and repeated huzzahs are heard on all sides. The two disguised jesters, who are usually the best horsemen, caracole round the bridegroom, separate him from his companions, and lead him up to the groomsman, who presents him with a nosegay, and repeats a long tedious address of French and German mixed together. The bridegroom returns thanks for the honour, and invites his brethren to accompany him to his bride. The cavalcade turns back, the music strikes up afresh, but all in broken notes, for the jolting and rattling of the carts greatly increases the difficulty of the performance to the musicians. But the bridegroom has more to go through yet before he can reach the bride. At the entrance of the village a chain is stretched right across the street. The man of straw endeavours, it is true, to break through it with his horse, but in vain. That is known beforehand. "*Qui vive !*" he

then cries : " Answer ! or—" Instantly a few young lads who had staid behind for the purpose appear, accompanied by girls dressed in white, the youngest of whom presents another nosegay to the bridegroom. " Are you for peace ?" asks the man of straw. " Yes," they reply : " but we want to drink the bridegroom's health, we want to look at him ; that is why we put the chain." Meanwhile a parley is carried on in a low voice, the end of which is that the bridegroom agrees to pay them forty or fifty francs to expend in drink. "*Laissez passer!*" is now the cry, and a sturdy lad rushes frantically out of the house, brandishing a heavy club, with which he breaks the chain in two. " Good luck and a blessing be with you !" they all cry ; " we have knocked the devil on the head : fare you well !" The procession moves onwards, and the crowd which accompanies it increases every minute. But they have not yet reached the bride. Upon the bridge stands a cart, which blocks up the way. A peasant steps forward and says, " In that cart sit a couple of old toppers ; they wish the bridegroom good luck, and want to drink to his health." And the bridegroom must pull his purse-

strings once more, but all this he knows beforehand. The cart is now shoved out of the way, and at length they reach the bride's house. Here all the guests are already assembled, and ready to go to church. After a short pause, during which wine is handed to the horsemen, the whole procession starts for the church. First of all appears a troop of genii, with their legs up in the air, playing upon instruments of their own invention: no wedding is without these. Then the fiddler and his companion, the shoe-maker Trip, who blows the clarinet. At the wedding which we are describing the fiddler appeared in great state: he wore a three-cornered hat with the brim flapping, a dress-coat with white facings and a blue collar, knee-breeches and hessian boots. He played the march of the Bastille or the Marsellaïse—nothing but revolutionary tunes. For our fiddler has no Sunday suit but his old imperial uniform, and can play no other marches. His comrade plays second with prodigious vigour, for he has the widest throat in the village, and plays the clarinet as an amateur; that is to say, that he gets his eating and drinking free by means of it. Then follow the

maiden guests, all wearing wreaths of flowers; then the bride and her bridesmaid. The bride wears a wreath of flowers, interspersed with rosemary, which is the symbol of love, from being green the whole year round, and very apt to cause a headache. She is followed by the bridegroom, led by the groomsman. On either side ride the horsemen, who are already very unsteady in their saddles, and who accompany the fiddle with the reports of their pistols. Then come the married men, in long coats with large steel buttons, red waistcoats, knee-breeches, and shoes with buckles: their countenances and demeanour are as solemn as though they were following some one to the grave. Last of all come the old women, with their rosaries in their hands, for these cannot be dispensed with even at a wedding. The horsemen wait outside the church-door, and, while the ceremony is going on within the church, the man of straw delivers the following harangue:—"The bride has just said yes. She pretends it is for the first time, but folks say that she cried because she has had to wait so long. What say you? shall we carry off the bridegroom to the Lion tavern? There our parson is the host, our bride is the bottle,

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which is always willing and says yes, and the newly married man shall lead the dance." These words are a prelude to deeds. No sooner does the bridegroom appear at the church-door, than the two young men, who have now laid aside their straw and leaves, seize him and carry him into the tavern. Should he resist, he gets a ducking in the river. The confusion becomes greater every moment. "Gentlemen and ladies!" says a man standing in a cart, "here may be had water for fleas and bugs, a water against getting drunk, remedies for all diseases. Break each other's legs, pull off one another's heads, and then come to me and I will cure you in a minute." "What is it you do," asked an old woman one day in my presence, "with the water for fleas?" "Why," replied the mountebank, "you catch them and throw them into it." "And that against getting drunk?" asked another. "You drink a few gallons of it before you go to the tavern." "*Du cirage!*" cries a dapper little Frenchman, "*Du cirage amphibie hydraulique aux deux cent vingt un, du cirage à vapeur! Six sous la boite. Ça brille, ça luit, ça blouit, que c'est un plaisir de voir. Savez vous, Monsieur, que les sabots de sa Majesté, je*

veux dire des chevaux de sa Majesté ont été cirés de mon cirage que voilà lors du sacre sacré. Eh bien, à le voir on ne le croirait pas! Du savon cosmétique pour les lentilles. Freckles, blacking, blacking for freckles!"—the little Frenchman shouts and chatters himself hoarse, pushes up to everybody, and is very civil. But in the evening people are apt to miss some of their things. However nobody minds, with a fair and a wedding to boot, to make up for all. At length, when every body has danced enough, when some have got quite drunk, and others have fought till they are half or wholly dead, after the girls have changed their tumbled and dusty clothes, the dance of death and the resurrection begins. It is executed as follows.

A tree is planted at one side of a dancing-floor in the open air, and upon it is fixed a burning candle in a lantern the size of which is determined by the will of the groomsmen or by the state of the weather. In the centre of the dancing-floor stands a table with a few chairs upon it for the musicians. All the young men and girls who have taken part in the festivity assemble round the tree, where the newly married pair

also stand. The music strikes up at a signal from the groomsman, who dances with the bride. They are followed by the bridegroom with the bridesmaid, and then by all the other couples in succession. The waltz tune proper to this occasion is plaintive, languishing and quaint. At every third turn the dancers change partners, that is, the man stops, leaves his partner, and offers his arm to the next following girl, while his partner passes on to the young man immediately preceding her. Only the bridegroom must on no account dance with his bride; when her turn comes he makes her a bow and passes on to the next. Nor may any one dance faster or slower than the rest, because usually various objects, such as watches, kerchiefs and the like, are the prizes of the couples first in due succession. This dance continues under the control of a strong-fisted master of the ceremonies until the taper is burnt out. The purpose of this dance is, that the married couple should now for the last time dance with others. The moment the taper goes out the leader cries, "Dead!" the music ceases, and the partners bow and curtsy to each other. A gallopade strikes up, and

the bridegroom kisses his partner three times, as often as they pass the tree. The bride is treated in like manner by her partner. After a certain time the tune suddenly changes, the bridegroom embraces his partner, and the bride is embraced by hers, and both couples bid each other an eternal farewell, and this is to be the last kiss that man or wife are ever to receive from strange lips. The kissed pair, that is to say, the lucky youth who was dancing with the bride, and the girl who was waltzing with the bridegroom when the taper went out, are attended to their homes by the company and the music; and it frequently happens that they really become a pair by marriage in due time. This is the dance of death, to which I shall have occasion to revert at the close of my tale.

My reader is already aware that a wedding such as I have described was to take place at Sesenheim during the week of the fair. Adalbert, who had now been at home for three months, had not yet seen Marzoff; and as he could not discover where he was, he

entertained but slight hope of avenging his sister's disgrace upon her seducer. Gumper had meanwhile unintentionally inspired him with a dislike to the profession of a soldier ; and, to add to his vexation, he was constantly told that his sister had herself to blame for her misfortunes, with other insinuations of the same kind, which malicious persons so well know how to convey under a pretence of sympathy. Altogether he had not spent one happy hour at home. He had not however as yet spoken a harsh word to his sister about her shame ; on the contrary, he seemed to love her all the more. He had frequently declared that he would be revenged upon Marzolf, but Stasi always sought to turn him from his purpose ; for she had not yet ceased to love Marzolf, and she still secretly cherished a glimmer of hope. On the second day of the fair Adalbert and Stasi sat side by side at the window. " Where can he be now !" sighed Stasi : " Oh I would have staked my life upon it that he loved me."

" Hush, Stasi !" replied Adalbert, " he was unworthy of you. It always pains me to hear you speak of him, for your words make me feel my weakness

and my poverty all the more." At this moment Gumper appeared in the street, and pointed to Michael the watchman, who followed him, and who, after ringing his bell as much as he thought sufficient, cried in German and in French, that tomorrow at ten o'clock Monsieur Marceau would let his lands on lease for five years: at ten o'clock, he reiterated, at the Lion tavern. "Did you hear?" said Adalbert to his sister, who grew deadly pale: "Tomorrow, tomorrow!"

Gumper now came into the room. "I knew how it would be," said he: "Marzolf is going to turn his lands into money, and then he will be off to France, where the handsome girls grow. And will you let him go thus, without so much as with your leave or by your leave?" asked he of Adalbert.

"You have guessed my thoughts, old friend," replied the young man. "You were once a brave soldier:—he or I must fall."

"For the love of God!" cried Stasi, "kill me rather."

"What!" said Adalbert, "you wish to die with him, do you? But you know your darling Marzolf

may be left alive for you, and I may be killed, and then you may kiss and fondle him to your heart's content." And by this time he had talked himself into such anger, that he pushed Stasi from him, and was going away with Gumper.

"But after all," said Gumper, "if you think better of the affair, you will see that Stasi is not so very unfortunate. She has got a handsome fortune with her child; and your mother, Adalbert, has already suffered enough. You might delay the affair; perhaps when Marzolf grows older he will repent, and will try to make good his fault. A slight wound or two, it is true, would do him no harm; it would cool his blood a bit: but it is better to bide your time,—don't you think so, Adalbert?" But Adalbert left the room without answering a word. "There he goes," said Gumper; "he is just like what his father was before him—just as headstrong and hasty, but good, brave and generous. Let him go, Stasi; Marzolf will not so soon put him down, and the affair may turn out to your good. When he sees that Stasi, my Stasi, has such a gallant brother, who knows?—Stasi," said he, turning to go,

"mind, I must be your partner in the dance of death at your wedding."

On the next morning, that of the wedding-day, at six o'clock, a carriage rattled past Stasi's house. The noise waked her out of a frightful dream. She went to the window, and saw Marzolf get out of the carriage, superbly dressed, and followed by two women in bonnets and veils. All the blood rushed back upon her heart, and she felt very faint, when Adalbert came into her room to tell her what had happened. He silently pointed to the carriage, and Stasi forced a smile. "How," said he, "you can still laugh, after you have disgraced our family!" Stasi was terrified; it was the first unkind word he had spoken to her; it pained her all the more, and she ran to her mother's room for protection. Adalbert followed her: "You need not be afraid," said he, visibly angry; "but attend to my orders. You will today put on your best dress; you will go to the wedding, though not indeed as a maiden, and you will dance like the rest. Do you hear what I say, girl?"

"But good heavens!" cried she, "what is the use of this? I was never fond of dancing, and it is

years since I have dressed myself smartly. What will the people say of me?"

"What can they say more of you," retorted he furiously, "than that you pursued Marzolf, that you would be seduced, and that you only were not fond of dress and dancing, because you liked better to poach in the dark at home? What can they say more than that you were a proud minx, who never thought any of the village lads good enough to walk with, and that you played the saint and the prude in order to cover your bad conduct? Do you suppose that people don't talk because you don't hear it, or because I don't tell it you?"

"Kill me!" cried the poor girl, flinging her arms round her brother: "kill me at once! for if you go on reproaching me in this manner, as surely as Christ died to save us I will throw myself into the Rhine."

"Throw yourself where you will, you can fall no lower. Oh if our father were still alive!" Adalbert sobbed like a child and left the room. A few minutes after his mother sent for him, and talked to him for a long time, but nothing which even she could say had power to move him from his purpose.

He went out after once more commanding Stasi to dress herself. "Thy will be done!" said Stasi, raising her hands toward heaven. "Oh God help me in my distress!"

Adalbert tapped at the door and walked straight into Marzolf's room. On seeing him the latter started in affright, but he soon recovered himself, and welcomed his early friend as if he were delighted to see him. "Why what a man you are grown!" said he; "I scarce knew you again. And such a pair of mustachios too as you have got! Here, my dear ladies," said he turning to the women, "let me present to you my early friend Adalbert, a brave and handsome soldier."

"Mr. Marceau," replied Adalbert, "I have not come either to make or to receive compliments."

"You are heated," said Marzolf. "Come with me, and we will take a turn in the garden." They excused themselves to the ladies and went.

"What is Stasi about?" inquired Marzolf.

"You should ask her that yourself. She weeps at home with your children."

"Why, my friend, you know when a man is

young, he is apt to commit a good many faults of this kind. I cannot marry Stasi, although I love her: I must look higher. I am going to Paris with these ladies, one of whom is my betrothed. Her uncle is private secretary to the prime minister, so you can understand what I am aiming at. I will settle property enough on your sister to satisfy her, and when the children are grown up I will undertake their education. I am quite rich enough for this, and you too shall have no cause to repent it, if once I see my plans succeed." Adalbert wiped the big drops of sweat from his brow. "I can assure you, my good fellow, I never would have married Kate if my father had not literally forced me."

"What! did you dishonour her too, base villain?" said Adalbert, seizing him by the collar. "Do you suppose I am come to beg of you?"

"Do you want to murder me?" cried Marzolf: "I am not afraid of you, and will fight a duel with you according to the rules. Moreover I have never owned that Stasi's child was by me, and I can take away my own from her any day."

"Ha!" groaned Adalbert, letting him go. He

was so suffocated with anger that he could not speak another word.

“Very well! you will fight a duel with me. Do you prefer pistols or swords?—which you please. But listen; I must first let my farms and put my affairs in order; this will take me the whole day. To-day we will appear as friends. Do not let my ladies perceive anything of the matter, and tomorrow—tomorrow we shall meet differently.” Adalbert left him, after looking at him with wondering scorn.

He now returned to Stasi, and did all he could to comfort her, flattered and coaxed her as he took her to the dancing-ground. Though paler than usual, Stasi was still extremely pretty, and in obedience to her brother’s order,—perhaps not quite without some other motive,—she had dressed herself as well and as carefully as possible. She danced with no one but her brother. Towards evening Gumper came into the dancing-room; he tapped Adalbert on the shoulder, and asked, “Well, how did you fare?”

“Very well,” replied the other. “Tomorrow—”

“The cowardly *blanc bec*!” replied Gumper; “he

is going to start this evening; I heard it this moment from the coachman, who was getting one of the horses shod in the smithy."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Adalbert; and without another word he went home, kissed his mother, and then returned to the dancing-room in full uniform, buttoned up to the chin. No sooner had he arrived there, than a messenger came from Marzolf to invite him to supper. He accepted, and Stasi was not a little pleased at perceiving such friendly intercourse between Marzolf and her brother. It was her last pleasure.

"My dear fellow," said Marzolf in French to Adalbert as he came into the room, "these ladies were so charmed at making your agreeable acquaintance, that they begged me to invite you. They are delighted to have found such a polished gentleman in a village; and as they wish to visit the banks of the Rhine, I have resolved to stay here a few days longer, and to confide the ladies to your honour and friendship." Adalbert now no longer entertained the slightest doubt as to the truth of what Gumper had told him, but he pretended to be the dupe of his

enemy, and seemed as well amused as he was able to appear until evening.

"Let us go and see the dance of the dead," said he at length: "it is a curious sight for strangers at any rate." Marzolf agreed, and offered his arm to his betrothed, while Adalbert took care of her sister. When they had reached the dancing-floor, Adalbert excused himself to the two ladies, and went to fetch his sister. Marzolf turned pale at sight of her, and Stasi clung to her brother.

The dance now began. "Oh!" said Stasi, "if I could but embrace him once more!"

"Embrace him then!" cried Adalbert, flinging her from his arm towards Marzolf.

"My own Marzolf!" sobbed Stasi, flinging her arms round his neck.

At this moment there was a sound of broken glass. Adalbert had smashed the lantern to pieces. "Dead!" he shouted; and drawing a double-barrelled pistol from his bosom, he fired full upon Marzolf's back; the bullet grazed Stasi's arm, and she fell to the ground with Marzolf. "Dead!" cried Adalbert again, and blew out his own brains with the other barrel.

The surrounding crowd rushed in all directions in wild confusion ; no one rightly knew what had happened, or what was coming. There were loud cries of murder, and the police were called in, but all was over.

Marzolf opened his eyes : he lay in Gumper's arms ; he exclaimed, "Cursed—"

"Don't swear now," interrupted the old Jew : "your last hour is come. Shall Stasi's child inherit half your property?"

"Yes," groaned Marzolf.

"Step closer, all you folks," said Gumper to the bystanders, "and listen to what he says!" Then to Marzolf he repeated the question, and added, "Do you say it in full earnest and consciousness?"

"Yes," muttered the dying man, and his head fell back.

Stasi was carried away insensible, and Marzolf taken home for dead. Gumper carried home the unfortunate Adalbert, who was left lying on the spot alone. The two ladies had their horses put to directly, but they were so pelted out of the village that they were taken ill from the fright, and lay in bed

for a week or two at an inn three or four miles from Sesenheim.

Marzolf and Adalbert lie side by side in the grave, spite of the refusal of the minister to bury them. Stasi recovered her health, but is become what countryfolks call a simpleton. The two boys, who are the richest people in the village, are called Adalbert and Marzolf.

A month after this event a girl from Nancy came to Sesenheim inquiring after Marzolf. As she was poor and had no papers, she was sent to the house of correction at Strasburg as a vagrant.

UDILIE AND GERTRUDE.

In the year 1792 there stood but one house where is now the village of Schirrhoffen, near Haguenau in Alsatia, and this house was, after the Alsatian fashion, called the castle. In it lived a rich landowner, who, disliking solitude, invited some Jews, who lived at Saufenheim and bought his corn, into his neighbourhood, and even built them houses, most likely in the hope of regaining by the profits of building what he had lost by the corn-trade. He had two daughters, of whom one was married and already had seven children. His son-in-law had also built himself a house not far from the castle. He wished to marry his younger daughter to a theologian, but on condition that he should never seek clerical employment. He found what he wanted

in a young man from Baden, who readily exchanged the trade of theologian for that of corn-factor; and after having been duly instructed by the Jews, carried on his dealings with the peasants in the fertile and beautiful districts near the Rhine. Directly after his daughter's marriage, however, the father himself, who had lost his wife, married his maid in the hope of having a son by her; but to his great annoyance, and still more so to that of the theologian and his elder son-in-law, the maid-servant bore him five daughters one after another. When she lay in of the second, the wife of the theologian also gave birth to a girl at the same time. The child was called Udilie, and the mother died a week after her birth. A few years after, the theologian, whose name was Kauser, married Dinah, the daughter of his brother-in-law, so that Udilie's cousin became her stepmother. To complicate the matter still more, Dinah's brother, a lad of fifteen, was subsequently affianced to Udilie, who was then only ten years old. This was the posture of affairs when the old father of the family died, leaving a property of one hundred thousand dollars to be divided among seven heirs, one

of whom was Udilie, who had a right to a whole share as his daughter's child, although the theologian had now given her several brothers by his second wife.



I.

Towns-people usually know very little of real country life. Even when they live in the country, they remain in a certain seclusion peculiar to a town life, and retain so-called polished habits. Very few authors have penetrated into the heart of country life: of German writers I know only Lafontaine and Iffland; most likely they were born in a village. Kotzebue never struck out the right line; Schiller knew country life, but did not describe it; and Goethe never saw it but in Sesenheim, and there only on the poetical side.

The passions manifest themselves in a totally different manner in the country from what they do in a town; for every kind of civilization tends to conceal the passions, and to enable people to remain physically unmoved both in joy and sorrow. In the country, on the contrary, all emotions show them-

selves in extremes : moderation is a thing unknown to the peasant, who is a child of nature, entirely composed of superlatives, and lacking the nicer shadings of character, especially when he comes but seldom in contact with the inhabitants of towns. One must have experienced all this oneself in order to be able afterwards to estimate the immense difference between a peasant and a citizen or civilized man. There lies a whole world between them, of which both are unconscious, because each believes that all must be like himself; and if by chance they come in any way in conflict with each other, even the passions are silenced by wonder. A townsman has no idea of what a peasant is capable of doing in his rude energy, both in vice and in virtue; and on the other hand, when the peasant sees the townsman to all appearance indifferent in a concern which to him seems of vital importance, he stands aghast, opens his mouth, and says with great truth that "his senses are at a standstill."

Matthew, for that was the name of the lad who was affianced to Udilie, was studying at Hatten, a very rich village ten miles from Schirrhoffen. I say

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studied, although it is true he learned neither Latin nor Greek ; but he was to be made a clever man of, and to that end his parents sent him to the Protestant clergyman at Hatten "for his learning," as they call it, that he might be taught French, German, writing and accounts. But the clergyman was a student, and took but little heed of his boorish scholars, but left them entirely to the usher, who had to teach about two hundred children alone and unassisted. The reader must recollect that this was in Alsatia, and immediately after the times of the revolution and of the empire, when public education was so fearfully neglected. The usher was building himself a house, and he employed his young and sturdy scholars in carrying bricks, mixing mortar, fetching sand and the like, and gave them each day one single lesson in French—a language which he did not himself understand. Towards the new-year he dictated to each of them a very eloquent German letter, which they all sent to their respective parents, after copying it off to serve for the following year. I am the fortunate possessor of a copy of this letter, which was as follows :—

“Already the new year knocks at the door : come in, I cry, but bring with you good fortune. My own happiness however I entrust to you, but that of my beloved parents I wish that you should bear with you, nay that you should conceal it beneath your snowy pinions. Yes, my beloved parents ! I pray only for your good fortune. And why should I not ? Do I not owe to you life, food, clothing, board and schooling here,—in short everything that I possess ? Is it not you that pay my most skilful and excellent teacher ? Yes, again I pray ; may this new-year greet you with every rapture and delight. May it afford you abundant harvests, good potatoes and turnips, excellent rapeseed, and fine crops of hay. I implore all this from our Saviour Jesus Christ, who loves all those that trust in him ; and I am persuaded that he will hearken to the innocent stammering of his little children. Therefore I thus wish you a happy New-year, as I cannot do so orally. Oh how I should rejoice so to do ! but your will be done ; and I am and remain your faithful, loving son,

MATTHEW SCHLOSSER.

*“Présentez mes respects à toute ma famille, et sou-
haitez lui de ma part tout ce qu’elle désire.*

*“Saluez de ma part la bonne Udilie. Si j’avais de
l’argent je lui aurais envoyé quelque chose.”*

The last private paragraph was probably an indirect demand for money. The stammering of the innocent child Matthew had rather a peculiar character. We shall presently see that he could already stammer “I love you” very intelligibly.

II.

Close beside the Parsonage stood the house of the maire, commonly called Järfriedrich, a name composed of Jörg (George) and Friedrich. A large garden divided into two equal parts, of which the one belonged to the clergyman and the other to the maire, at once separated and joined the two houses,—just as the sea divides countries from each other, and yet serves to unite them. On either side of the boundary-wall between the two gardens, and close against it, stood a summerhouse, which the possessors called the pavilion, but which was in fact a

mere arbour overgrown with vines, a prettier and more useful thing no doubt than any pavilion. I know not whether by chance or otherwise, but so it happened that Matthew often sat in one arbour, while Gertrude, Järi's daughter, was in the other; neither do I know of my own experience whether Gertrude was handsome, but I have heard that all the lads in the village admired her; moreover she was accomplished, for she kept her father's books for him, rode his horse, sitting astride like a man, and was a match for any man in the village in strength and activity, and she was the best and most graceful dancer of all the country round into the bargain. Matthew often laughed and joked with her, and told her all his plans, and talked to her about his little Udilie, till Gertrude grew quite jealous of the child, especially when she heard of the fifteen thousand thalers which she was to bring him as her marriage-portion. For a long time Matthew did not find this out, but a scene which took place one day at length opened his eyes.

The arbour belonging to the maire was covered with very fine grapes, which were particularly tempting to Matthew, who devised the following scheme

for gaining possession of a few bunches : he took a long pole, made a slit in the end of it, into which he inserted a small wedge ; with this slit he grasped the stalk of a bunch of grapes, and then twisted it round, so that his instrument was manœuvring in his neighbour's arbour, while he lay to all appearance asleep in his own. For some time this did very well, but at length the maire perceived the diminution in the number of his grapes, which were all counted, and ordered Gertrude to keep watch upon Matthew ; she however feigned to see nothing of the matter. One day however Matthew was thirsty, and began to exercise his pole upon the maire's arbour. Järi chanced to be standing at the window : quick as lightning he seized the thickest stick he could find, whistled to his dog and ran out at the back door, which opened into the parson's garden. It would have been all up with Matthew, had not Gertrude, who perceived her father's design and knew his character, rushed after him, exclaiming, "Run, Matthew! run as fast as you can, or you are lost." At this moment Matthew saw the maire and his dog running furiously towards him ; he jumped up on the

wall like a squirrel; but the dog sprang after him, seized him by the coat, and had almost dragged him down again. "Pull off your coat!" shouted Gertrude again; and her father, foaming with rage, instantly quitted Matthew and rushed upon his own daughter. Blow after blow from the heavy stick fell upon her tender body; the dog, more humane than the father, left his prey and stood whining and trembling at his master's side, as if wondering how a father could thus ill-use his child, and what could cause such cruel strife between two people both of whom he loved; truly at this moment the beast seemed wiser than the man. Gertrude never winced nor uttered a single cry; but the dog ran back to Matthew, as if to seek for help from him. Matthew, seeing what was going on, jumped down off the wall, and ran with the dog to the spot where the furious peasant was beating his own child till the blood flowed, seized him by the collar and flung him against a tree so that all his ribs cracked. "Monster!" he cried, "what has your daughter done to offend you?" Gertrude now sank to the ground, which she watered with her blood and tears. Her father, shaken by the blow, slowly recovered himself;

he saw his child frightfully disfigured, but his anger was not yet appeased, and he now thought to take his full revenge. "Spaniard!" cried he to his dog, "*à moi!*" and rushed upon Matthew; but Gertrude heard it and called the dog, who loved her much more than he did his master, and staid with her in obedience to her call, while Matthew wrenched the stick out of the hands of the infuriated maire, broke it in pieces and walked quickly away; not however till he had raised Gertrude from the ground where she lay, and had whispered something in her ear. Gertrude now endeavoured as well as she could to get to her room, and the old peasant at last regretted what had passed; for his rage was now somewhat quieted, especially since his dog had refused to obey him. "No matter," said he, as he went back into his house streaming with sweat; "I'll teach her to take the part of strange lads against her own father. If she loves the lad I'll kill her—yes that I will; for a child that does not obey her father deserves death, and nothing less."

III.

I hope that my readers will already have perceived that Spaniard was no common dog ; nay, did I not fear that he would interest them more than Gertrude and Matthew put together, I would give an accurate description of him, the more as he is destined to play a very prominent part in the earlier part of this story.

Gertrude kept her bed for two days after the beating which she had received from her father. Spaniard watched over her, and Järi watched Spaniard, for he was already jealous of his daughter and had lost all confidence in his dog. As soon as Gertrude had recovered, she bought Spaniard a collar, secretly gave him the most juicy bones, and never sat at her knitting in the arbour without the dog lying at her feet.

Matthew was not suffered to show himself in the garden at all ; the parson had been informed of what had taken place there, and forbade his entering it ; but Matthew already loved Gertrude beyond all measure. One day when she was sitting in the arbour, Matthew went into the garden, spite of the

prohibition, for the parson was gone to a christening. The moment that Spaniard saw him he jumped up and growled, but gently, as though he could read the thoughts that were in the hearts of both the lovers. "What are you grumbling at, old fellow?" said Gertrude, playfully tapping him on the head; "leave me to grumble,—you are happier than I." Spaniard now ran to meet Matthew, jumped upon him and licked his face with such vehement affection, that he stood pale and speechless from surprise. Gertrude blushed crimson, for she felt that the dog had spared her a declaration of love by making it for her; and Matthew, who did not lack penetration, tried to free himself from Spaniard's embraces and caresses, in order for the first time in his life to kiss a handsome girl whom he dearly loved. Spaniard was now in a perfect ecstasy: at every kiss he wagged his tail as vehemently as if he were personally concerned, jumped up upon the lovers, licked their faces alternately, and when the ungrateful pair testified some impatience at his tenderness, he barked aloud as if to reproach them. Ere long he announced the arrival of Gertrude's father. Matthew prepared to effect his retreat,

and tried to take Spaniard with him ; the dog hesitated, till Gertrude said, " Go with him," and at the same moment reached a piece of white bread to Matthew, who showed it to the dog and went. Spaniard now followed him with so ready and joyful an air as seemed to say, " Even without the bread I would follow him."

What I have just related may perhaps appear improbable to many, but that which I am now going to relate certainly nobody will believe, although it is literally true.

As soon as Spaniard knew Matthew's room, he became the sole confidant of the two lovers. On the following morning Gertrude wrote some insignificant note, without a signature, addressed it to Matthew and twisted it round the dog's collar. She then said to the dog, " Go to Matthew," and Spaniard instantly executed the commission. Matthew, amazed at the dog's cleverness, kissed him, and entrusted him with an answer back. On his way he met his master in the court, but darted past him like lightning and went straight to Gertrude, who was busy winding yarn. When she had relieved him of his burthen he

ran back again to his master, and looked at him with an air as if he would say, "I have been too many for you after all, you old curmudgeon!"

For more than two months the lovers corresponded by this means. Matthew no longer appeared in the garden, and became very industrious; but he always knew to what spinning-room Gertrude was going, or in what field he should find her overlooking the maids at their farming work. Meantime their mutual love had grown stronger and stronger: all manner of tender and polite letter-writers had been copied out, the kisses which had been exchanged already amounted to millions, nay, I am forced to confess that they often went out together in the fields, spite of cold and rain, and sat for hours under a walnut-tree, which is called the lovers' tree to this very day. Their happiness lasted the whole winter, and the whole village knew it, save only the cross Järfriedrich, and every one trembled for Gertrude as well as for Matthew, for a great joy never lasts long.

IV.

Misfortunes never come single, says the proverb, and accordingly three or four fell upon our lovers at once. Järi suddenly sold his dog to a smuggler, who wanted him to carry sugar and coffee out of Bavaria into France*.

Gertrude knew nothing of this misfortune till it had happened, for, after Matthew and her own family, Spaniard was the dearest friend she had. About the same time, one of those impartial philanthropists that are to be found everywhere wrote to Schirrhoffen and informed Matthew's parents of his love. He likewise did Järi the important service of communicating the actual state of affairs to him, after which he rubbed his hands, went to bed and dreamt he *was* in heaven. Without a moment's delay Järi took a

* The Alsations smuggle a great deal by means of dogs. They put saddles on their backs and carry them into the Bavarian territory, whence, after loading them with a contraband cargo, they let them run home again. This did not cease till the adhesion of Bavaria to the Russian zollverein.

rope, which he doubled and twisted, and betook himself to Matthew's room, in order to give him, as he said, a sound thrashing. Fortunately, or rather I should say unfortunately, Matthew was gone to Lauterburg, to buy back Spaniard for twice what he had been sold for; so that poor Gertrude had to pay the penalty for both. The maire went straight from Matthew's room to his daughter's. As soon as she beheld him and perceived his object, she ran to the window and cried, "Father, if you touch me I'll jump out of the window." The gloomy tyrant hesitated for a moment, swore a few times, and asked her if it was true she was in love with Matthew.

"But father, why do you hate Matthew so? he is a good lad, and rich into the bargain. There is Udilie in Schirrhoffen, that has fifteen thousand thalers, and she is ready to marry him."

"But I'll have none of him," cried the maire, throwing down the rope; "I'll have no grape-stealer for a son-in-law, not I."

"But father, do but consider: that business of the grapes was a mere boyish frolic," replied the good-humoured girl, going up to him and stroking his

cheeks ; " he has never set foot in the garden since, and besides he is almost a man now."

" You love him, child," said Järi ; " you love him without asking your father's leave. Do you know how rich I am ? I can tell you that when I am dead you will be twice as rich as Udilie."

" May God preserve you for many a long year, dear father ! I don't want your money ; but it is true that Matthew is my sweetheart, and I'll marry nobody but him."

" Won't you ?" replied her father : " we shall soon see that. I'll break every bone in your body."

" You may beat me to death, father, before I'll take anybody else. I'll wait until I'm of age."

These words roused all the maire's fury. " You are not of age yet," shouted he, and gave the poor girl such a box on the ear, that the blood gushed from her nose ; and then, without taking further notice of her, he left the room. On the following morning the maire betrothed his daughter Gertrude with her cousin Fritz, who was the notary's clerk.

Järi's was a remarkable character. In the same degree that he was tyrannical towards his children,

he was just and righteous in his office as maire. It might be said of him that he loved the whole village except his own children. He was a widower and lived alone, served only by Gertrude and her two younger sisters. Avaricious towards himself and his family, he was munificent to strangers. Every winter he distributed wood among the poor, whose interests he defended on all occasions. He tolerated no cheating or oppression, and was kind to all men except his own children, whom he brought up under the discipline of the stick and the rope's end, so that they trembled whenever he entered the room. He was moreover downright to a degree which amounted to brutality, and obstinate and conceited of his own opinion. He would have been capable when angry of shooting a man on the spot who robbed him of a cherry, while at the same time he often gave to some poor person all the money he had about him. There was a sort of fearful inconsistency in his character: it seemed as if he were created to be a despot. He never forgave an offence, and would have bestowed his last farthing upon one who supported his opinions. Fritz, who had long had an eye upon Gertrude, had

studied how to please him with success, and accordingly she was betrothed to him against her will. But as the proverb says, one man may bring the horse to the water, but fifty can't make him drink ; and Gertrude had something of the resolute, stubborn nature of her father.

A week after Matthew was taken away from school, with the intention of sending him to some town in France. Spaniard, who, though loaded with ten pounds of coffee, had still attempted to run home to his beloved Gertrude, was shot on the way by a douanier. So end truth and fidelity in this world.

V.

Udilie, the child of sorrow, increased every day in beauty and sweetness. We peasants know that the most beautiful flowers sometimes shoot up and blossom upon a dunghill. There are human flowers of the same kind. Udilie's stepmother and cousin was a worthy counterpart to the maire at Hatten, only that she possessed none of his virtues. Dinah was sharp and witty : she had the keenest and most biting

tongue in the village, and was accordingly feared by all, and liked by some who loved to hear their neighbours abused. But at home she was malignant without wit, and tyrannical without salt. She had so completely mastered her husband the theologian, that he never dared to say a single kind word to Udilie, whom he dearly loved, because Dinah incessantly reproached him with preferring the child of his former wife to hers. Meanwhile Udilie was made to take care of the children, to cook and to clean the house which her father had built with her money. All the thread for the shirts and house-linen of the family was likewise spun by her; in short, she did everything, while Dinah went gadding about, gossiping and defaming all the folks in the village, and when she was out of humour returned home to load Udilie with abuse and oaths. It was fortunate for the poor girl that her stepmother had not the courage to beat her. Udilie's misery was all the greater, as the young daughters of her late grandfather, who were her dearest playfellows, clearly explained her own position to her, and showed her that her stepmother was in fact dependent upon her, and not she upon her step-

mother. Nevertheless she bore every insult and ill-usage in silence, for the sake of her father and guardian, whom she heartily pitied for being so completely under the slipper of a woman who, to crown all her other defects, was also ugly.

The greatest torment of all to a girl is to be so thoroughly bound that she must bear to have her future husband, as it were, daily served up to her on her plate before she is at all grown up. By this process the young man, though never so good and so handsome, loses all charm, and the girl is tortured by this constant endeavour to clip the wings of her heart before they are fully grown. This torment was inflicted upon Udilie more and more sharply every day. I was personally acquainted with Dinah and Udilie, and will endeavour to describe them both as well as I am able.

Dinah was what townsfolk commonly call "slight," and villagers "as meagre as a broomstick"; her face was French, that is small and round, with a sharp-pointed nose in the middle of it. She was marked with the small-pox, and had a dingy complexion; on the other hand, she had fine hair, handsome white teeth,

sparkling though small eyes, and pretty feet. Udilie was the very reverse of all this; she had early reached the boundary between childhood and maidenhood; her shape was not slender, but beautifully proportioned, and the roundness of her bosom could no longer be hidden. Her bright blue eyes gained a more intense expression every day, while her glances became daily more shy and downcast. She blushed suddenly at the slightest allusion to Matthew, though she had heard him constantly talked of for the last six years. She had a dimple in the right cheek whenever she smiled, but then her smile also showed her bad teeth; this she knew, and freely owned it. Her hair was pale brown and inconveniently abundant, and so long that she could cross her plaits upon her breast and tie them behind like a child's kerchief. Her throat was well-turned and as white as a maiden's flesh should be, for white as snow it was not; her lips were very red and pouted somewhat saucily, her nose blunt but straight and decided, of the true Alsatian shape: her forehead appeared low, owing to the growth of her hair, which covered it far down, but was planted with the symmetry of a Greek

statue ; she was always graceful, but less so when she walked than when she ran ; then she bent forward, like an angel flying over the face of the earth ; moreover she had small feet. One peculiarity in her was that she made some blunder even in the slightest thing she did ; and whenever she examined anything with attention, she leaned her pretty head upon her right hand, and looked as curious and as wondering as a child of six years old. She was very inquisitive withal : this was her only fault, and it was visible even in the shape of her nose. She was not so pretty in profile as in full face ; and when any stranger looked at her while she was unemployed, she thrust her hands into her apron-pockets as though she knew not what to do with them. Such was Udilie. I forgot to add that her face was pale as well as fair.

VI.

Within the last few years the number of inhabitants, and with it the luxury of the village of Schirrhoffen had been frightfully on the increase : unluckily truth and virtue do not increase in the same ratio

with the population, and therefore they are so very dear, owing to their increasing rarity. The want of a French teacher and of a dancing-master was already felt in the village. In Alsatia real cultivation of mind is exceedingly scarce, because the German inhabitants think themselves highly refined when they can speak a little French ;—as if it showed such immense progress in refinement to be able to say, “*Maman, donnez moi un morceau du pain,*” instead of, “Mother, give me a piece of bread.” However an Alsatian is a German born, and a German he will remain ; for, however Frenchified, he still swears and loves in German.

A German soon presented himself to teach French, and a Frenchman to teach dancing ; the former settled in the village, the latter came over from Hagenau twice a-week. Udilie and her playfellows took lessons from both ; her father wished to make her an accomplished girl, and her stepmother, who noted down every expenditure in order afterwards to deduct it, at an increased rate, from her fortune, thought this a good speculation. It is commonly said that a man’s pupil is very apt to become his mistress ; but I be-

lieve that many a mistress would never have been loved at all had she first been her lover's pupil. Udilie however learnt to speak French with great ease, and was the best dancer besides ; but it must be admitted that she took many a walk with her French master, and this her companions threw in her teeth whenever she knew her lesson better than they. This master was a young man from Baden-Baden, called Gottlieb, who had formerly lived for some time at Paris, and who now stayed, as it were by chance, at Schirrhoffen, a village swarming with handsome girls. Gottlieb was by no means forced to give lessons, for which too he was very ill paid, as he had a rich uncle whose heir he was ; but the place pleased him, he said, and he could live there cheaply : many of the villagers however believed that he had an eye upon Udilie and her fortune.

When Kauser was building his new house, a journeyman joiner worked for him, who, though the youngest of all the workmen, was much the cleverest. Anthony, for so he was called, was born at Saufenheim of very poor but respectable parents, and was considered as a pattern for all young workmen. This

young man fell so violently in love with Udilie that he grew sick from it. As he knew that she was too rich to marry him, and also that she was betrothed to her cousin Matthew, he did not dare to tell his love to her; and he accordingly left Schirrhoffen as soon as he was well enough to move, without showing himself again in the village. His passion however was no secret; all the village knew it, and Udilie in her innocence felt very kindly towards him. Among the villagers some laughed at, and others pitied him; but Gottlieb especially sneered without mercy at the poor journeyman, who had fallen in love with a girl who had fifteen thousand thalers to her fortune. Thus Udilie already did not want for suitors, though they caused her much vexation in the end. But hold! I find that we have almost lost sight of Matthew and Gertrude. The unfortunate are always the first to be forgotten.

VII.

When Matthew was fetched home from Hatten, his parents resolved, for two reasons, to send him to

France ; in the first place, that he might perfect himself in speaking French,—in the second, that he might forget Gertrude. He did not oppose the wishes of his parents, and declared himself ready to set out on his journey to Nancy or Metz without so much as taking leave of Gertrude. His bundle was tied up and taken to the office, in order that he might find it *poste restante* on his arrival. His father put three hundred francs into his pocket, and his mother secretly added another hundred to it. Half the village accompanied him nearly to Bischweiler, where with many tears he took leave of his relations, among whom was Udilie. To her however he did not say a word more than to any stranger, and, wonderful to relate, she did not seem the least hurt by his neglect. He then continued his pilgrimage as far as Zabern, not however without making a considerable hole in his purse by the way ; for though he was already a tall grown-up lad, he had never had so much money in his possession before. On the road he thought over the new acquaintances he should make at Metz, the new teachers whom he was to choose for himself, the fine letters which he should write home, and lastly

of the means he should employ to inform Gertrude that he still loved her, and should for ever continue to do so. He staid a whole day at Zabern, indulging in all manner of fancies ; as, for instance, he was going to buy a horse in order to ride to Metz, in the firm belief that the four hundred francs would never come to an end. Finally however he set out on foot, resolving to look out at Pfalzburg for a companion on his journey to Metz.

I take for granted that my readers have already heard of the Pass of Zabern, on the borders of Alsatia, where, at the very top of the pass, or rather of the lofty mountain, stands the village of Quatre Vents, where real France and the French language first begin. There Stanislaus took the perilous leap on his faithful steed, whose hoof-marks in the rock are still looked upon as a sacred memorial. From the top of the mountain you may look over the whole of Alsatia ; the various villages pour out their smoke, which from that distance appears to mingle as though they formed but one large community. The spire of the Strasburg minster peeps inquisitively above them in the background, and behind that again the hills in

Baden rise like clouds in the horizon. A quick and practised eye can even recognize each particular village, except those which happen to lie in very deep valleys ; and no Alsatian leaves this spot without breathing his last tearful farewell to his country.

Matthew gazed in wonder and admiration upon this glorious scene. At his feet the thick forest, with which the mountain was overgrown, shelved so regularly down as far as Zabern, that he almost fancied that he might have slidden down over the tops of the trees. Beyond that he recognized the ploughed fields : "There," said he to himself, "there lies Hagenau, and close to that, Schirrhoffen, and hard by Schirrhoffen, Hatten. Oh Hatten ! And there is Gertrude ; and perhaps she is now in Fritz's arms." A cold, sick shudder went through him ; he felt a weight upon his chest, and gasped for breath. In order to breathe a freer air he climbed to the top of a tall pine, whence he thought he might be able to see the spire of Hatten : he gazed long in that direction, but at length he slid quickly down the tree, threw himself upon the earth and wept bitterly. He did not himself know what sudden grief had seized him : it was

not only the thought of leaving Gertrude, now betrothed to another,—it was home-sickness, which suddenly seized upon him like an infectious disease. He had already wept for two hours, without feeling any the lighter at heart, when he determined to proceed on his journey. They will laugh at me, thought he,—I shall be jeered at ; and he raised himself up, and went on his way towards Quatre Vents. But his legs refused to carry him ; he dropped several times from exhaustion, and evening now closed in. On a sudden he jumped up, turned his back full upon France, and ran, in one breath and in a few minutes, down the same hill-side which it had taken him two hours to climb. Every tree, every bush seemed to nod approbation to him ; the beggar by the roadside, to whom he had given a sou on his way up the hill, welcomed him back with a hearty shake of the hand ; and when at length he got back to Zabern, he breathed again as freely as if, like Columbus, he had discovered a new country.

He turned in again at the tavern, to the great amazement of the host, who was amused at seeing him again so soon, and who permitted himself a jest

on the subject, which cut Matthew to the heart. These people, thought he, know not what it is to love their country; and with this sentiment he went to bed. The next morning however he was terribly puzzled what to do; for, not to mention the disgrace, his clothes were by this time at Metz. He accordingly endeavoured once more to ascend the Pass; but it would not do, he felt too weak. He therefore remained for a few days in Zabern, and then proceeded to Mass-Münster, now called Marmoutier, a village inhabited by a great number of rich Jews, and where there was a considerable French college for young lads. An idea now struck Matthew, which seemed to him very good; and he accordingly made a bargain with the head-master of the school, that he was to attend the classes as an out-boarder: he then hired a lodging, resolved to be extremely diligent, sent to Metz for his clothes, and then sat down to write home; this however he found the most difficult part of the business.

When the letter reached Schirrhoffen, the whole family assembled, in order to hear all the marvellous adventures of Matthew's journey, and his descriptions

of Pfalzburg, Luneville, Blamont, Nancy and Metz. But at the very top of the letter stood the date Marmoutier, the 2nd May. "Marmoutier!" said Dinah, "whereabouts is that? is it near Metz?" Her mother could not solve the difficulty, especially as the first sentence in the letter was as follows:—"I am happy to inform you, my dear parents, that I have arrived safe and sound at my journey's end." The French teacher was called upon for further information, as even Udilie did not know where Marmoutier was situated. He read the letter, and instantly guessed what had happened. "Why, he is at Mass-Münster," said he, "and there he intends to stay." "Mass-Münster!" they all cried, opening their mouths wide with astonishment. "Mass-Münster near Zabern, little more than twenty miles from here—impossible!" said Udilie, "there must be two Mass-Münsters, or I should say two Marmoutiers."—"Mass-Münster near Zabern," coolly replied the French master, who was secretly delighted at the affair: "you have only to read the letter to convince yourself that it is as I say."

"Jesus and Mary!" cried Dinah, "how did he

get there?" But this question nobody could answer, for Matthew had said nothing about the scene upon the Pass, and contented himself with praising his teachers, his companions, and his own industry. "The thing is easily explained," said his father; "I have a shrewd guess why he wishes to stay in Alsatia." "You may write him word, father," continued Dinah, "that next time he had better come and read us his own letter, and then write himself an answer, —that the post was not invented for such a place as Marmoutier."

The teacher and Udilie left the room, each making their own remarks upon Matthew's behaviour. It cannot be denied that Matthew lost a great deal by it in the eyes of Udilie, who ascribed his proceedings to cowardice. The family however resolved to leave him at Marmoutier, and to write to the headmaster about him. His father even determined shortly to pay him a visit, in order to assure himself of the real state of the case. As to Gertrude, when she heard that Matthew was only gone as far as Mass-Münster, she gathered fresh hope, and indulged in

a few more incivilities than usual towards her betrothed.

VIII.

In the same degree as Gertrude was tender and devoted in her love, she was rude and violent in her anger. It might be said of her, that she was a town-bred girl in her love, and a country wench in her hatred. This is no such rare phenomenon. Love is the first teacher and refiner of feelings and manners. Fritz however submitted to all her affronts, and took great care to say nothing about them to her father. This Fritz was a sort of half-educated pettifogger, who, as the peasants say, was neither fish, flesh, nor good red-herring; but he was handsome, well made, and very polite in his manners. One evening, when Gertrude was at a spinning-room, where her spinning-wheel was always the most richly adorned and her hemp the finest, Fritz as usual walked in and wished her good evening. In the course of the day Gertrude had received news of Matthew, not however from himself direct, but from a beggar who came

from Mass-Münster, and who told her all manner of things, true and false, for two sous. A few days before she had had her fortune told by a gipsy, who plainly told her that she would not marry her sweetheart, but that neither would she marry him who wanted to make her his wife by force. Gertrude had been out of humour ever since, and Fritz was the sufferer. "Good evening, my dear Gertrude!" said he aloud, after bowing most politely to all the rest of the company. But Gertrude made no answer. "Won't you even wish me good evening?" said he at last. "My mouth never speaks what my heart does not feel," she replied. Fritz looked puzzled, and the whole company seemed taken aback. But these kinds of scenes are not very uncommon in the country, and as everything of this sort that Gertrude had said to Fritz when they were alone had produced no effect, she determined to give him a double dose in the presence of his comrades and her own playmates. Fritz, who was well used to these sorts of outbursts, retorted upon her: "I know very well, Gertrude, that this is only your way of joking, for you love me spite of what you say."

“Yes,” replied she sharply, “I do, under one condition, namely that you will hate me. The whole village knows who it is I love, Fritz; and if you were a lad of any honour, you would have told my father the truth long ago. For mark my words—I tell you plainly, that if he forces me to marry you, you shall be none the better of me. I don’t fear anything you can do to me,—that you well know; and if I did not choose it, even my father could not beat me, for I am stronger than he and you put together; but I tell you beforehand, that on the very first night I will tie you up hand and foot, and hang you against the wall like that Queen at Worms of whom you read in the chronicle*. If you don’t believe me, just come here and we will wrestle together, and if you can throw me, I’ll be your wife without more ado; but if I throw you, then you must do whatever I command you.” So saying she kicked away her spinning-wheel, rose and drew herself up to her full height.

“Bravo!” cried all the company; “spoken like a man! At her, Fritz, or you’ll be the laughing-stock of the village!”

Fritz broke out in a cold sweat. He well knew

* Niebelungen Lied: tenth adventure.—*Transl.*

that he could not even force a kiss from her ; she had knocked him down once already in the hayfield. Gertrude was weak only when her father beat her ; on those occasions she stood stock-still, folded her arms tightly across her chest, and suffered herself to be thumped till the paternal arm was weary. She then commonly fainted, as the act of endurance had exhausted all her courage and power. But at other times it was well known that she could break the most savage horse, and in her seventeenth year she had challenged the strongest lads of the village to wrestle with her, much to the satisfaction of her father Järi, who always boasted that he had brought her up to be so hardy by means of severity and a rope's-end.

" *Allons, Fritz !*" said Gertrude ; " what, are you ashamed to try your strength against your sweet-heart ? It won't be the first time either." This put Fritz upon his mettle : in an instant he had pulled off his coat, cleared a space, and clasped Gertrude round the waist. Gertrude clasped him with her left arm and flung him upon his head. As she did so, however, he seized her round the neck and gave her a kiss.

This attack was altogether unexpected, and accordingly it made Gertrude furious, and she revenged herself by pinching his arm so hard that he cried out lustily, and let her go. This, which was considered as the first round, did not count, as neither party had the advantage. "Kissing is not fair," said Gertrude, pulling off her boddice; "and if I had thought of it, it should not have happened: you shall not come so near me again by two feet." And with these words she seized him by the waist with the one hand, while with the other she held the upper part of his body at a distance from her face. Fritz was by no means weak, and he first attempted to trip her up, and then pressed her close to him in order to throw her backwards, but Gertrude gave him no time. With one jerk she lifted him from the ground, and flung him like a giantess into the lap of one of her friends, saying, "There, Katinka, do you take him; you like him better than I." Katinka and Fritz rolled upon the ground together, so violently had Gertrude thrown him, and all the company held their sides for laughing. Gertrude shook back her hair upon her shoulders, and smoothed it down with her

hands. Katinka got up, complaining that her sides ached, and at length Fritz was picked up amid roars of laughter. "Well, Fritz," said all the lads, "what will you do now? Do you suppose that we shan't tell Järi all about it?"—"I shall do whatever Gertrude chooses," said he, putting on his coat. "I love her all the better for being stronger than I. But if you go on teasing me, I'll fight you all round; for you well know that there is no one but Gertrude that can fling me down in that way." By these words Gertrude at once became the conquered rather than the conqueror. A woman is always a woman: she saw how dearly Fritz loved her, how patiently he bore each and every insult from her, and this went to her heart, and changed her dislike into pity. "Come here, Fritz," said she; "now you may give me a kiss and accompany me home, and tomorrow I will tell you my conditions." Fritz did not wait to be told twice, and kissed Gertrude with the greatest tenderness, to the astonishment of all the people present, who could not the least understand it. Such is man: natural and human feelings puzzle and astonish him far more than the monstrous and unnatural.

IX.

In the village of Schirein, the post-town of Schirrhoffen, a great merry-making was going on ; the new catholic church was being consecrated, and Catholics, Protestants, Jews and Pietists, of whom there are a great many in Alsatia, and more especially at Bischweiler, all took part, if not in the ceremony, at any rate in the festivities which followed it. A wedding in a rich Jewish family was celebrated in Schirrhoffen in the course of the same week, the whole of which was accordingly spent in feasting, dancing, drinking and fighting. There is no lack of any of these entertainments among the Alsatians, who waltz and galopade the whole year round, with such untiring energy that the musicians often drop asleep under the benches long before the dancers are tired. All the neighbourhood was pouring into Schirrhoffen. The lanes and roads were covered with caravans of carts, over which scarlet pocket-handkerchiefs waved in guise of flags. Gaily dressed country wenches, seated beside smart village lads, vied with each other in attracting the attention of passers-by. The re-

ports of guns and pistols resounded on all sides ; and whenever they ceased, the inharmonious sound of flutes and clarionets was heard between. The first question which the girls of the neighbouring villages asked each other was, "Are you going to Schirrhoffen ?" and the first entreaty to their parents was, "Oh do let me go to Schirrhoffen too !"

Gertrude resolved to take this opportunity of seeing Udilie. She therefore commanded Fritz to obtain permission of her father for her to go, and the Maire granted it willingly, as Matthew was not at home, and he always liked an opportunity of parading his horses and his daughter. Accordingly, to the great amazement of all the girls in Hatten, Fritz and Gertrude were seen on the following morning seated side by side in a little open cart, which in Alsatia is called a *char-à-banc*, and rattling through the streets. Fritz cracked his whip like a postilion, and the Maire's handsome horses neighed and snorted as they trotted along. Gertrude had dressed herself as smartly as if for a wedding, and nodded to her playmates on either side the way as she drove through the village.

When they arrived at the village of Schirrhoffen,

she drove straight to the house of Matthew's parents, who were not a little surprised when they saw a strange gaily dressed girl accompanied by a young man dressed like a town gentleman drive into their court, and get out without so much as saying with your leave or by your leave. Their astonishment however reached its height when Gertrude walked straight into the room, which was filled with strangers, and presented her betrothed. "My name is Gertrude," said she concisely: "I am the daughter of the Maire of Hatten, and your son Matthew's sweetheart,—or at least I was."

"Holy Virgin!" cried Matthew's mother, "it is Gertrude!" and she threw her arms round her neck and kissed her. The old woman had always rejoiced at knowing that her son was in love with so good a girl; for Gertrude was known far and wide in Alsatia as a virtuous, and, what there signifies more, as a very rich girl.

Matthew's father shook her by the hand, bade her welcome, and ordered the lad to unharness the horses, and to feed them well.

"Where is Udilie?" was Gertrude's first question.

"Ah, how pleased she will be to see you!" said the old woman, thinking exactly the contrary. For she had already owned to herself, that if Gertrude was not quite so fair and delicate as Udilie, still she would look like a hero or a giant beside her, and she had not failed to perceive how much more courage and resolution Gertrude had than her supposed rival. "I will send for her directly," said the old woman leaving the room. But in reality she went to her herself, and told her to dress herself in her best, for that she had a terrible rival to deal with, and that Fritz went for nothing. Udilie did as she was desired; but while she was dressing, her stepmother Dinah, who had far different views, went in search of Gertrude. "You are welcome," said she to her, as she went in and dropped her a curtsy. But Gertrude scarcely answered her, for she was busy talking to Matthew's mother.

"Mother," said Dinah, "tell Gertrude that I am your daughter, or better still that I am Matthew's sister, otherwise she will not listen to me, as I seem to have no value in her eyes on my own account."

"Is your name Dinah?" said Gertrude. "Yes,"

was the reply. "Ah, Matthew liked you less than anybody!" remarked Gertrude coldly: "and as I know Matthew better than all the rest of you put together, I believe that he had his reasons, and I don't wish to have anything to do with you either."

Dinah turned pale with anger, and her mother seemed taken aback. "You see," continued Gertrude, "that I am straightforward like my father. It is true that I am betrothed, but till I am of age I have no will of my own, and I am but just twenty. I assure you however that I have not given up Matthew, who is my own age; and I tell you beforehand, Madame Kauser," added she haughtily, "that if I have the luck to become your sister-in-law, you shall never cross my threshold, and for no other reason but because I know how ill you treat Udilie."

"So that's what you are come here for?" screeched Dinah: "just look at that great girl who runs after the men, and lets her father thump her every day. I know better. I suppose you are come here to have two or three days' peace and quiet, and to get something good to eat, for I am told that in Järi-friedrich's house folks don't get white bread to

eat with their meat, but black bread with their black bread."

"That's a lie," replied Gertrude; "our horses have a fatter and handsomer shoulder than some folks' who talk about eating white bread. Perhaps if those folks were to eat oats, they might grow fatter and not be so cross."

It must be owned that it was too bad of our heroine to make so cruel a return for the hospitality she had received; and by this time Dinah was crying with rage, and unable to answer a word. The old man had listened to the quarrel with great amusement, and kept saying, "Gis, gis," as if setting a couple of dogs at each other. "I have a respect for you, Gertrude," said he at last; "you are the sort of woman I like; and as for you, Dinah, you have found your master, and you had better hold your tongue, and try to make it up with her."

At this moment Udilie came in. Gertrude, who sat there as proudly as any queen, asked who she was, and Udilie went up to her modestly and offered her a hearty welcome. Gertrude was a little taken aback by this, and doubted for a moment whether

Udilie was in earnest, or whether she was deceiving her. "Come, Udilie," said she at last, "we will go and take a walk in the wood: I have a great deal to say to you." Udilie blushed up to the eyes, but said she was quite ready to follow her; whereupon they left the room together.

"The devil's in that girl!" said the old man; "I can't think how Matthew ever plucked up a heart to fall in love with such a wench." "She's an unmannerly, ill-tempered witch," said Dinah. "Mind you don't say that again," replied her father; "she does not fear us all put together; and as for me, I tremble at the sight of her. They say she's not afraid of any six men." "She's the pattern of a girl," said the mother at last: "self-willed as she is, she's honest, faithful, and fears God; and when she speaks of Matthew, she finds the sweetest words for him and for me. I wish old Järi would give his consent, and she should have him with all my heart." "And what would become of Udilie?" said Dinah. "Udilie!" replied her mother; "I don't believe that Udilie loves Matthew a bit; and indeed Gertrude is come here on purpose to know the rights of the

matter." "What do I care about love?" cried Dinah; "that is all very well for the townsfolk, who have nothing else to do; but we villagers don't want love. Did I ever love my husband? and yet I was forced to marry him before I was sixteen. No she shan't have Matthew, if it costs me my head to prevent it. I'll write this very day to her father at Hatten, to tell him to come and fetch her home with the horsewhip." "If you write one syllable," threatened the father, "you shall never enter my house again. Besides Gertrude is betrothed, and her bridegroom's whole body does not seem to me to be worth her little finger. After all Udilie is perfectly indifferent to me, and Gertrude will be much the richer of the two." "But have you forgotten," continued Dinah, "that to any man but Matthew my husband will have to render an account of his guardianship? Have you forgotten that you forced me to marry him, and that I was in love with some one else myself? that I already have five children by him, and that, of the fifteen thousand dollars, scarce seven hundred in ready money are forthcoming? If you have forgotten all this, you have forgotten that you are my

parents. First you plunged me into misfortunes : do you now want to make me a beggar ? and this will happen as soon as Udilie is of age, and marries any one but Matthew. You must and shall help your daughter. Mark my words !” cried she furiously, laying her hand upon the latch ; “ if he will not, I’ll bring ruin and disgrace upon you all. You shall all go with me before the bench at Strasburg. You know what I mean : that’s where I’ll take you, if Matthew does not marry Udilie before she’s one-and-twenty, and give my husband a receipt in full. He’ll get *two thousand* dollars with her, and not a penny more nor less. Now the murder’s out : I have kept it to myself long enough, and I must speak at last.” And with these words she left the room. Her parents stood there as if struck by lightning.

X.

Gertrude and Udilie walked together for a long time, without however getting much better acquainted as yet. A supper was hastily cooked at the house of Matthew’s parents, of which the two girls and Fritz

partook. The old people were visibly depressed ; and the whole talk turned upon indifferent subjects, such as the festival, the dancing, and finally the distribution of beds, which were very scarce. Gertrude instantly declared that she would sleep with none but Udilie, who received the proposal with pleasure. At about ten o'clock the party broke up ; Gertrude went home with Udilie, and Fritz found a snug lodging in the hayloft, as all the inns were crowded, and many of the strangers could get no shelter at all.

The two girls were soon undressed, and each silently admired the other's beauty. Udilie jumped first into bed, and Gertrude blew out the candle : but the moon seemed inclined to be very inquisitive that night.

When they were both laid in bed, Gertrude said to Udilie, "Udilie, do just give me a kiss." No lover could have asked this favour in a gentler voice ; and Udilie almost involuntarily threw her lovely arms round Gertrude's neck, and kissed her over and over again with the greatest affection. "You are a good girl," said Gertrude, "and I love you almost more than Matthew. Do but open your heart to me, dear

Udilie, now that we are friends ; tell me, do you love Matthew ?” Udilie made no answer, and Gertrude pressed her to her bosom and said, “ As sure as I am a Christian woman, dearest Udilie, if you love Matthew I will give him up, and marry Fritz in a month’s time. To tell you the plain truth, I am come here for nothing else but to know this. I love Matthew with all my heart, but I am not a weak girl, and I can forget him if I choose. Remember, Udilie, that we are sisters ; neither of us has got a mother, and all orphans are sisters.”

Udilie wept.

“ Don’t be a baby, Udilie,” she added ; “ you are prettier than I am—I know that ; I am taller and stouter and older than you, but you are the prettiest and most graceful. I am a peasant, and you are a town-bred girl ; my father is rough, but yours is learned, and he is fond of you. I know very well that I am not to compare with you. Look how hard my hands are,—I never wore gloves in my life,—but your fingers are fine and soft though you do work : but you don’t know what real hard work in the fields is. And then you have a fortune of your own, while

I am worth nothing till after my father's death. God grant him a long life ! but while he lives, he will give me nothing but my meat and drink, and that I must work for,—it is his principle, and I am his child. So just speak out your mind, will you ?”

“ Dear Gertrude,” said Udilie at length, “ I don't quite know what love is. I have read very little ; only since I have learnt French, my master has now and then lent me a book, in which there is something about love. Hitherto, however, I can assure you that Matthew is just the same to me as any one else ; and, to speak plainly, I can't understand why you have taken such a fancy to him.”

“ I daresay you don't,” said Gertrude ; “ there are so many things in the world which one can't altogether account for, even to oneself. But I will tell you all about it ;” and she continued in a lower tone of voice. “ You must know, Udilie, I have been brought up like a dog,”—at these words the tears rolled down her cheeks,—“ I say, like a dog, neither more nor less. When I was a child, I had fine dreams and fancies, and felt that I was something better than a mere peasant-girl ; but my father ill-used me so much

every day of my life, that at last I began to hate him. O Udilie ! if I had but been a boy, I should have been off to seek my fortune long ago. But if a girl runs away from home, folks say directly that she is good for nothing. So I bore the ill-usage in silence. I constantly read the Bible, which was my only friend, and made up my mind to do my own way, and to let myself be beaten. You don't know how it breaks one's heart, when one wishes to love one's parents and finds no return, and has not a soul in the world to turn to for comfort. I had nobody to be fond of but our dog, and my father sold him to spite me."

"Don't talk so, Gertrude," interrupted Udilie; "you wring my heart : only let me tell you how my stepmother treats me. If the pancakes are burnt she scolds me, and if my father buys me a new gown, she does n't speak to him for a whole week ; and he and I dare only look at each other by stealth, because he is so much afraid of her ; and thus I suffer twice over."

"Alas, my little angel !" said Gertrude, embracing her again, "nobody can feel for me as you can : we will always love one another and write to each other,

won't we? When first I knew Matthew, he always talked about you and your beautiful eyes, and told me about your family, but he cannot endure his sister. Now I must confess that I loved Matthew so dearly at first because my father hated him; and little by little I told him all my griefs, and he pitied me, and promised always to love me. I am sure I don't know whether he is handsome or not, for love is blind, they say.—Udilie!” cried she suddenly, “I do believe you are going to sleep.”

“No, I am not,” replied Udilie, trying to keep awake; “but I don't want to know any more why you love Matthew. I promise you that I will never marry him, if it depends upon me; my father won't force me, and if my mother-in-law treats me so ill that I can bear it no longer, I will come and live with you.”

“Do so, dear,” answered Gertrude; “you will always find enough with me, and I will share everything I have with you, even my life if I could.”

“So would I,” replied Udilie quickly, and kissed her again; “but now let us go to sleep, for we shall have to dance tomorrow. Put your arms round me so.” And they both fell asleep.

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Next morning, when the theologian, Udilie's father, wanted to bid his child good-morning in secret, he found both the girls still sleeping, locked in each other's arms. Thus, thought he, do painters and poets picture sleep, the brother of death; and thus do I conceive paradise. He felt that such a sight was not for him, and stole softly out of the room.

XI.

"I have a strange sort of feeling," said Gertrude, as she dressed herself; "I can't help thinking that Matthew himself will come here today."

"I have some idea of the kind myself," said Udilie, "but I advise you to take care how you behave. Fritz might get angry."

At this moment music was heard under the window.

"Hark, Udilie!" said Gertrude, "there is somebody serenading you. So you did not tell me all—
fie upon you!"

"It is either Fritz," replied she, "or our French master, who makes love to me, but whom I do not

care for, though the folks will have it that I am in love with him."

"Why you care for nobody," said Gertrude: "and has no one else fallen in love with you?"

Hereupon Udilie told her the story of the joiner's man, adding, that she did not know where he was living, but was heartily sorry for him, because he was so good and honest. The music grew louder and louder, and Gertrude ventured to open the window; but there was no one to be seen. Presently Dinah came into the room, and reproached Udilie violently because Gottlieb ventured to serenade her: she said that he and some other gentlemen were standing behind the house, and that she was sure they must be waiting to accompany Udilie to the dance.

Gertrude, who had made it up as well as she could with Dinah, made excuses for Udilie, saying that it was not her fault if Gottlieb was in love with her, and as to the matter of the partners, she would engage Fritz to dance the whole day with Udilie.

"And what will you do?" inquired Dinah sarcastically; "do not you intend to dance at all?"

"Oh never fear, I shall find partners enough,"

replied Gertrude coolly, as she finished lacing her boddice.

I must here remark, that throughout the Rhenish district of Alsatia, the peasant-girls dress themselves in the French fashion, all but the head-dress,—those at least who have any pretension to breeding; the rest wear a dress half French and half that of a German peasant. This has a very droll effect, for many a girl is thus a peasant from her waist downwards and a townswoman above it, while many another is exactly the reverse. Most of them however are dressed after the Strasburg fashion, and the wine-growing high land forms the only exception to this custom.

Where nature is not very bountiful in her gifts, the mind of man always developes itself early and with increased vigour. A stranger is amazed when he hears and sees the acuteness in business and the ingenuity in love intrigues that are to be found in Sesenheim, Drusenheim, Auenheim, Teinheim, Roggenheim, Denkelsheim, Schirrhoffen, Hatten, Redern and the other villages in that district: whereas the inhabitants of that part of Alsatia which lies nearer

to France are much more stupid and honest. It must be admitted that much of the blame of this rests with the Jews, who are always a good deal in advance of the peasantry in point of intelligence ; and in no German country do Jews, Protestants and Catholics live together on such friendly and intimate terms as in Alsatia, since the French Revolution.

The pair of new, but already inseparable, friends had by this time dressed themselves and breakfasted ; and as soon as Udilie had concluded a few trifling household arrangements, they prepared to walk to the village of Schirein.

The good-natured Fritz had to bear the brunt of a good deal of jesting on the part of Matthew's father about his unruly bride, but on the whole he was well content. Gertrude had wished him good morning, and seasoned the greeting with the command that he should dance with no one but Udilie and herself ; nay more, in consideration of his obedience, he had even been allowed to give her a kiss.

At about eleven o'clock they went through the wood at Schirein towards the dancing-floor ; for at the village of Schirein there grows on the right-

hand side of the road a wood called the Forest, while the houses of the village skirt the left. The village itself is nearly two miles long, and the forest extends as far as Bischweiler and Hagenau. Suddenly Gertrude said, "I think I see a horseman out yonder coming towards us."

"It must be our doctor," said Udilie; "he often goes his rounds on horseback."

"Look, how he gallops!" replied Gertrude: "he knows how to ride; he has a good seat on a horse. I am curious to know who it can be."

They stood still: the nearer the horseman came, the faster beat Gertrude's heart. She trembled in every limb, and leaned against Udilie. "'Tis Matthew!" she suddenly shrieked aloud. Matthew was just going to gallop past, when she called to him in a loud voice, "Matthew! come here,—leap over the ditch,—don't you know me?" She would have jumped over to him herself, but was rooted to the spot by surprize and agitation. Matthew, fairly puzzled, pulled up his horse and wiped the sweat from his brow. He could not understand how Gertrude came to be here, and with Udilie; but he

dismounted, tied his horse to a tree, and jumped over the ditch in a trice. Gertrude opened her strong arms, and Matthew rushed into her embrace with the eagerness of one who, tormented by thirst, suddenly finds a fresh living spring in the desert.

Fritz, who now perceived that he was in a very ridiculous position, proposed to Udilie that they should leave Gertrude alone with Matthew, and offered her his arm, which she accepted. But instead of going on to the dancing-ground, Fritz turned back, and went home to the village ; while Matthew (who had now got mustachios) slowly followed, with the bridle of the horse on one arm and Gertrude on the other.

As soon as he had reached home, Fritz harnessed the horses to the cart, and without taking leave of any one, galloped, like one pursued by the devil, through the village back straight to Hatten. He had at length got tired of the part he played ; and now that Matthew had so suddenly re-appeared, looking quite like a man, and a very handsome one, and that Gertrude had received him so warmly, just as if her real bridegroom did not exist, he felt that the best

thing would be to tell the whole truth to Gertrude's father. He drove slowly into Järi's yard, had the horses taken out, and went straight to the old Maire. "How now, Fritz?" said the latter; "back again alone, and so soon!"

"Yes, so the devil would have it," replied Fritz shortly.

"And where is Gertrude?" asked the old man.

"At Schirrhoffen, where she is dancing with Matthew, who came back from Mass-Münster to-day, and with nobody else I'll be bound. I have been her servant long enough. Gertrude may marry the devil if she likes it for me,—I won't have her."

"Say rather," replied the Maire maliciously, "she won't have you. And so you left my daughter alone, and slunk away like a thief! Get along with you, Fritz! Gertrude has more pluck in her little finger than you have in your whole body: you are nothing but a pettifogger—get along with you! After all, Gertrude is in the right for loving Matthew. I'll bet anything he would not have behaved so. Any rascal can take to his heels; a man need not be bred a notary to do that."

Fritz had departed some time before Järi had

finished his harangue. At last, when he was tired of talking, he saddled his horse and rode himself to Schirrhoften, in order to learn the real state of the case, to fetch his daughter home, and most likely to thrash her soundly.

XII.

No one in the village of Schirrhoften was more frightened by the arrival of Matthew and the departure of Fritz than Dinah. She set every engine to work to hinder the two lovers from coming together : she ordered Matthew to dance with no one but Udilie, and bribed several village lads to keep Gertrude constantly engaged ; but all her schemes failed. Udilie feigned a headache, even at the peril of having her sudden illness ascribed to jealousy and vexation ; and Gertrude, who was in the secret, danced like a mad girl with Matthew, and refused all the other lads, who were too much afraid of her to press their claims. She had never been so riotous in all her life before ; she kissed Matthew before all the village, and all the more when Dinah was present. "For today and tomorrow," said she to him, "you are

mine, and nothing in the world shall part us." Suddenly Järi came into the dancing-room. No one knew him, and it was some time before Gertrude saw him. At length, in the midst of a waltz, she caught sight of him, as if in a dream. She ran to him and said, "Father, please don't make a scandal here; the day will soon be over, and tomorrow I will go home with you, and there you can beat me as much as you please. But today you must leave me in peace; for mind you, father, today I'll not suffer myself to be beaten."

Järi neither moved a muscle of his countenance, nor made any answer; he was examining the people in the room. Presently Matthew espied him, just as he had finished a waltz. He instantly snatched up a glass of wine, and drank to the health of the honest and worthy Maire of Hatten. Not satisfied with this, he called for two waltzes and a gallop on his own account for Järi, which the latter was to dance with his own daughter—the best dancer. At first the Maire refused, but he ended by complying; and Gertrude, with a face beaming with delight, and casting looks of the tenderest gratitude upon Matthew, seized upon her father and opened the first

waltz with him. Järi had not danced for some twenty years, and since his day the easy gliding style of dancing had gone out of fashion. But Gertrude accommodated her steps to his, and danced in so subdued and modest a manner, that every one praised her for it. When the three dances were ended, Gertrude kissed her father, and said to him in a whisper, "I say, father, you have forgotten the grapes now, have you not?" Järi laughed, and began to drink, for Matthew had ordered the very best wine.

"Here's a health to Gertrude, Järifriedrich's daughter! and he that won't drink to her is a rogue. I'll stand the wine!"

"Well done, Matthew!" cried all the lads; "we will drink five-and-twenty bottles to Gertrude's good health."

"I will pay for them," said Matthew; "but you must know that without her father Gertrude is neither well nor happy, so above all here's to Järi's good health!"

The glasses were filled once more, and Järi already felt the effects of the young wine and the dancing.

"Here's to Spaniard!" cried Matthew, "—the most faithful dog that ever lived."

“Here’s his good health!” shouted the Maire, “especially now that he’s dead. I say, Matthew, you are a fine fellow!” said the Maire, reeling up to him and tapping him on the shoulder. “I never thought so well of you before: let me kiss you, my boy!”

“Have we come to that already?” thought Matthew: “well, we have made quick work of it.”

Gertrude, seeing the state her father was in, made a sign to Matthew, and between them they led him, singing and shouting, home to Matthew’s house, but not without great trouble; fortunately the night had closed in, and no one could see them. Gertrude went to sleep with Udilie, and Matthew stopped with Järi, in order to speak seriously with him as soon as he should have slept off his drunkenness.

But so far from being grateful to Matthew for his attentions, Järi was furiously angry with him next morning; he laid the whole blame of his own drunkenness upon Matthew, whom he called an insolent rascal and a seducer, and would have nothing to say to any of the family. Without stopping to consider, and ashamed of the condition in which he had been seen

on the day before, he sent for a cart, harnessed his horse to it, and set off towards home, taking with him the mournful Gertrude. He would not even allow Udilie to accompany them. Gertrude wept bitter tears at parting from her, and Matthew promised to be with her next day in Hatten, though it should cost him his life.

XIII.

Close to the road which passes through the village of Schirein, the forest makes a sudden bend towards the north, and is separated from the village at that spot by a large cornfield; at the edge of the forest the ground slopes, so as to form a green valley, which is traversed by a rapid and sparkling rivulet, called the Brownbrook, from the colour of its peat-stained water. At the extreme point of the forest stands a huge oak, several centuries old, under whose spreading branches the pilgrims usually rest on their way to Mariaeinsiedel.

A very different group occupied this sacred spot on the present evening. An old, but still hale and

active man was seated beside a thick piece of iron shaped like a cross, which he had stuck upright in the ground : this man's features were hard, his complexion almost black, and his eyes glittered in the dusk like those of a lynx. An old woman, the very model of ugliness, with a sharp, bristly chin and bleared eyes, was busily picking up sticks and endeavouring to kindle them while the man struck a light. In a few minutes a bright fire crackled and blazed beneath the oak, and the old gipsy—for as such our readers have already recognized her—hung a large iron pot upon the cross of iron, and began vigorously to stir its contents with a wooden spoon. A few paces further lay a large dog beside several bundles, among which two children crouched and half hid themselves ; and beyond them again sat a swarthy but handsome young woman, picking the vermin off her child in the dark. One member of the family was clearly wanting.

Such scenes as these were not rare enough at Schirrhoffen to excite much attention ; only a few children went out of curiosity to listen to the crackling of the fire and the outlandish jargon of the

gipsies; but they were soon fetched home by their parents and locked up, for there were many stories about of children who had been stolen away by the gipsies. And the moment there is an alarm of gipsies in the forest, no one sleeps soundly all the night through, for in Alsatia, as elsewhere, gipsy and thief are synonymous. No one however refuses them fire and salt, in compliance with some old superstition; and it seems that the village has been frequented by gipsies from time immemorial, owing most likely to its situation in the midst of the forest. The peasants call them simply "the heathens," but go to them once a quarter to have their fortunes told.

On the day of Gertrude's departure Dinah did not appear on the dancing-ground, Udilie refused to take part in any merrymaking, Matthew was gone to Hatten, and his parents, who were in the greatest consternation at Dinah's threats, let things go on just as luck would have them. Towards evening it was said that a heathen had been seen to leave Dinah's house, which indeed was nothing new, for Kauser's enemies accused him of buying stolen goods from them, though it was clear that he did not grow rich

at the trade, for all the village knew that his circumstances were none of the best, and that he had lost half his property by one single bad speculation in corn.

Next morning at daybreak Dinah suddenly rushed out, with scarce any clothes on her but her shift, and ran through the village screaming, "Murder and thieves!" "We have been robbed of all we possessed," cried she: "the heathens have broken into our house." The national guard was instantly on the alert, messengers were despatched on horseback to all the neighbouring villages, the newly consecrated church-bell was vehemently tolled, but Dinah still rushed up and down the streets shrieking, crying, sobbing, beating her breast, tearing her hair, throwing herself upon the ground, in short behaving like a mad woman. The neighbours picked her up, carried her to her parents' house, and fetched her children to her. It soon came out that Kauser himself was not at home, and Dinah said that he had gone to Strasburg on business the night before. Strangely enough Udilie lay in a deep sleep, and on being suddenly waked up at daybreak by such a terrible outcry, she thought

that the house was on fire, and ran into the neighbour's in her shift. Every one knew that the heathens had been in the village the night before, and all pitied Dinah, and still more Udilie, who said that the thieves had stolen above six thousand francs in ready money, which was in the house ready for the bargain which her father was gone to conclude in Strasburg. The whole village was in uproar, the confusion was increased by the presence of so many strangers, several of whom left the place all on a sudden; thus everything was turned upside down till towards noon. The heathens meanwhile had disappeared, and it was supposed that they had crossed the Rhine, either in a boat or by swimming, during the night. Dinah lay sick in bed; everybody was sorry for her, and a messenger was sent to carry the sad news to Kauser. Dinah's parents alone secretly shrugged their shoulders, but did not dare to confess even to one another what each privately suspected of their own daughter.

All Alsatia rung with the news of this extraordinary robbery; numbers of the heathens were arrested, but never the right ones, for the prisoners could al-

ways prove satisfactorily that they had not been in the neighbourhood of Schirrhoften at all during the night of the robbery. Petitions were presented to the prefect, entreating him to forbid all the heathens the country ; all the cunning men, soothsayers and witches far and near were consulted, in order to find out the thieves, but in vain ; even the gold and silver that were missing never made their appearance again. Kauser seemed resigned to his fate, and gave up his business altogether. Udilie was used far worse than ever by her stepmother, and finally folks talked about the robbery for the next six months, and thought no more of Matthew, Gertrude or Udilie.

XIV.

A great storm is ever preceded by a complete lull, only broken from time to time by the anxious chirp of some bird, that gulps down the first note of his song ere he has well begun it. In like manner every great event in the life of man has a certain period of quiet as a forerunner ; and what human being is there whose life contains no great event ? Often the

greatest is apparently the most trifling, but it may be the beginning of a new life or the end of a whole existence.

For a long time all the gossips in Hatten and Schirrhoffen were quite at a loss to know whether Fritz or Matthew would marry Gertrude, whether Matthew would be the husband of Udilie, whether Udilie were in love with Gottlieb or no, whether or no Fritz were still fond of Gertrude, and whether Kauser were ruined or whether he were not ;—these were all questions of life and death to the two villages, and the crisis which was to solve them was too long delayed to please the inhabitants. All the persons concerned were silent ; Gertrude worked hard as usual, Järi was more sullen and silent than ever, Udilie wept as she was wont to do, Fritz did not enter Gertrude's house, nor Matthew that of his sister, nor Dinah that of her parents. Who could solve all these riddles ?

All at once Matthew's father built a new house, and established a great iron depôt. Matthew stopped at home, and, as he could speak French, write, read and cipher, he acted as secretary to the Maire of the

village, but he did not venture to go to Hatten for fear Gertrude should be made to suffer the punishment of his presence there, and Spaniard's death and burial had cut off his communication with her.

All this time Dinah was not idle ; she took fresh measures, and teased her husband so long that she at length determined him to speak seriously to his daughter. Even this went on for a long time before Udilie could be driven to take any decisive step ; every night she watered her pillow with her tears, for it was now her sole confidant, and her future was black and troubled. At length however she made up her mind to write to her only friend Gertrude, and she spent a fortnight in writing the following letter, which Kauser himself delivered for her.

“ My dearest, only bosom friend !

“ I have long been wanting to write to you, to describe to you the troubles of my poor heart, and to seek comfort from you ; but I could never find an opportunity, and besides it would be too difficult, for how could I describe to you what I have to go through every day, or how could I write all that my poor heart has to suffer every day and every night ? It

would take me a whole quarter of a year to write all this ; and then there are so many things that one can say, which one can't describe in writing at all, especially when one writes so seldom as I do.

“ Do you recollect that night when we vowed each other eternal friendship ? Oh, for another such night as that I would give up my whole life ! I was born to misfortunes, I was the cause of my mother's death ; why was not I buried with her ? Dearest Gertrude, I shall weep myself to death ; even now my tears fall upon the paper, so that it is quite wet with them, and I can write no further,—I must wait till the paper is dry.

“ You must have heard of my dear father's misfortune ; he is quite ruined, and all my fortune is squandered—he told me so yesterday with tears in his eyes. What can I do ? he is my father, and I am but a poor, helpless girl. They say I am handsome, but no one will marry me without money.

“ Merciful Heaven ! when I think that I shall always have to live here with my stepmother I am ready to lose my senses. She makes it her study to embitter every hour of my life, and to poison every bit of

bread I eat, by treating me as if I was a beggar that lived by her charity. My father has no power in the house, and is only too happy when he can get enough to eat; for she has everything in her own hands, and she even locks up the bread before my face, so that I have often fasted and starved for days together, and yet I never did any harm so as to deserve to suffer such ill-usage.

“There is but one thing that can save me, and that is, if I can marry, so as to get away from my stepmother. But without money no one will have me but Matthew, whose parents would force him to it, because my stepmother would force them; for in reality, dear Gertrude, they do not care about it, for though my aunt, Matthew’s mother, is very fond of me, she is very fond of you too, and she would be delighted to have such a daughter-in-law as you, and I am sure I should be so glad of your happiness.

“You know very well that I don’t love Matthew; he is quite indifferent to me, and I only like him for his love to you; so that, if I am forced to marry him, I shall be doubly wretched.

“And as for you,—holy Mother of God!—you

love him, and if you don't marry him you will be miserable too. What is to become of us? My head is ready to split when I think of all this, and it often comes into my mind to throw myself into the Rhine; that would be the best thing for us all, for I have come into the world for nothing but to bring misfortune upon you all; and since I have known and loved you, I have been more unhappy than ever. This must end somehow. I cannot stay with my stepmother; and if I go, it will bring a lawsuit upon my father, and he told me yesterday that a lawsuit might bring him to the galleys. My blood runs cold at the thought!

"You must advise me, you must indeed. You must help me;—but how? I see no help. My father advised me to write and ask you to give up Matthew; but the very thought of it makes the blood stand still in my veins; for remember, dearest, that I should be quite as unhappy if I were forced to marry Matthew, as you would be if you had to give him up. May God and our Saviour help us! I can write no more. My heart's own sister, do you give me some counsel, or I am lost for ever.

"Your Udilie, in life or death."


XV.

Gertrude received this letter, and for eight successive days she came down looking every morning paler and more woe-begone than the last. At length, on the morning of the eighth day, which was a Sunday, on coming out of church, where she had prayed long and earnestly, she stepped straight into her father's room, and began as follows:—"Father, you will laugh at me, but—"

"That I do the whole year round," replied he, "except when I happen to be angry; but what is the matter now? Is Matthew on the cards again?"

"Only let me speak," said she.

Järi had not so much as looked at his daughter for a week, as was often the case, and since the Schirrhoffen affair he had not exchanged a hundred words with her; but he no longer beat her, and let things take their course. Today however he observed her paleness, and was frightened by the suspicion which he conceived from it. He looked at her sternly, and said once more, "What's the matter?"



“ I want to marry Fritz,” said Gertrude coldly.

Järi turned pale. “ What, Gertrude !” he exclaimed, but could not utter another word ; his suspicions were confirmed. Gertrude, who of course could not guess what was passing in his mind, was at a loss to understand the behaviour of her father, who was perfectly quiet. He would have been quite ready to kill her for the sake of a few grapes, but if her virtue had received a wound he would have pitied her—such was Järi’s humour.

“ Do you want Fritz to cover Matthew ?” asked he significantly.

She now understood him, and exclaimed, “ Father, you are a bad man ! I will have nothing more to say to you :” and she turned to go ; but Järi seized her by the arm and flung her into the furthest corner of the room. “ Stay there,” said he : “ why do you want to marry Fritz ? if you had plucked up courage to ask my leave for Matthew I would have granted it long ago ; only you choose to play the proud madam with your father ; but my name is Järifriedrich, so you had better speak out at once : do you wish for Matthew ?”

"No," said Gertrude coolly.

"This is too much for my patience!" shouted her father; "you must and shall marry Matthew, and no one else."

"Matthew is the very man I will not marry," said Gertrude solemnly: "you know very well, father, that I am not to be forced. If you don't choose me to marry Fritz, well and good; but I tell you once for all that I will not marry Matthew."

"What has come to the girl?" exclaimed the Maire: "for the last six years I have heard of nothing but Matthew, and now all at once you want Fritz, whom you have refused a thousand times. You are not in your right mind, Gertrude; you must be bewitched; I will fetch the parson to you. The affair must be settled, for I choose to die in peace."

"The affair may be settled directly," replied Gertrude: "you need only send for Fritz; he will be too happy to have me, and he is rich and good-natured, though he is weak and somewhat of a coward. But I'll take him spite of that, because I have my own reasons for so doing; and I can swear to you,

father, that your daughter has done nothing to be ashamed of."

"That is enough," he replied; "I know that your word is as good as an oath; besides you are now of age. You may go: I will send for Fritz."

A month later Gertrude was married to Fritz by her own father the Maire. After signing her name, she had a fit of spasms that lasted two hours.

This marriage was not exactly legal, as the announcement of it ought to have been posted beforehand at the town-hall, which Gertrude would not suffer to be done, as she did not wish that Matthew should know anything of the matter till it was over. When a couple is thus married by the Maire, they can never separate in France; but, owing to this irregular omission of the publication of the bands, the children are considered illegitimate, unless the man signs a special declaration immediately after the marriage to render them legitimate, which Fritz readily agreed to do.

As soon as Matthew heard what had taken place, he galloped over to Hatten and went straight to Järifriedrich's house. In the hall he met Gertrude,

but he walked past her into her father's room. "Monsieur le Maire," said he, "I am come to call you to account, and this time you shall not escape me, for I have stolen none of your grapes." Järi looked at him quietly, and coolly replied, "I have no account to render to you, and if you mean any harm to me, I do not fear you. And as for Gertrude, she you know fears no man, least of all you."

At this moment Gertrude entered the room. "Father," said she, "leave me alone with him for a moment, 't will be better so." Järi obeyed her. Matthew had seated himself on the bench, and leaned his head upon both hands: presently he began to sob like a child, and so loud that Järi heard it outside. Gertrude wiped her eyes with her apron, laid Udilie's letter upon the table, and staggered into the alcove.

Matthew, seeing her emotion, took the letter, read it twice, and sat for a time immersed in thought. At last he called to Gertrude, who appeared with eyes red with weeping. "You have plunged me, yourself and Udilie into misery," cried he: "I shall ride straight to Hagenau and enlist."

"Jesus and Mary!" cried Gertrude, "you will not do that, Matthew—you cannot do that."

"I shall do it as surely as we believe in God," he replied, "this very day. Come and give me the last kiss in the arbour where I gave you the first."

Gertrude threw herself at his feet and clasped his knees. "Matthew!" cried she, "do what I ask you; for my sake marry Udilie. I have married Fritz, without liking him."

"You could do as you pleased," replied Matthew; "you did not ask my leave; why should I be better than you? Give me this one kiss, and may God forgive us!"

"I cannot," cried Gertrude; "I must not—I am Fritz's wife. O Matthew, Matthew!"

Matthew sank down. "Oh that I ever should hear it! and you won't give me one kiss?"

"I must not," sobbed she, and ran out of the room. She turned round at the door and said, "God bless you! I will pray for you!"

"Yes, pray indeed!" he replied, and rushed after her, but Gertrude had disappeared.

The very same evening Matthew enlisted as a volunteer in the fifth regiment of Hussars, which marched to Metz the next day.

XVI.

Gertrude had been married six months, and was great with child, when one day Udilie drove into the yard, accompanied by Gottlieb. Gertrude started, but instantly guessed the truth, that Udilie could no longer endure to stay in her father's house: she was afraid of being poisoned by her stepmother, and all friendly intercourse between herself and Matthew's parents had ceased, so that she had no refuge left but Gertrude. Udilie was meanly dressed, but Gottlieb had promised to marry her without giving any further explanation of his plans. Gertrude received her like a sister, and Fritz, her good-natured but weak husband, made no objection, for he thought that Udilie would save him the hire of a maid. The aspect of affairs was much changed; the strong, healthy Gertrude had become a sickly, feeble woman, and Udilie's presence was very welcome to her. She offered at once to act

as maid, and, though Gertrude did not accept it, yet before long Udilie did the whole work of the house, and somewhat later she also went into the fields with a rake and spade. This did not please Gottlieb, for he well knew that Udilie's father was not poor enough to make that necessary; and when at length Udilie found her position too hard, she empowered him to seek the restitution of her property by legal means. Already her father had received summons upon summons, and there was a talk of gensdarmes, of sending to prison, of proofs of a pretended robbery by gipsies, when Udilie, as if driven by a presentiment, went to Schirrhoffen. She did not alight at her father's house, but at that of one of her early playmates, and here she saw six gensdarmes ride past. She sank down as if struck by lightning, when Gottlieb, who had come from Hagenau and heard of her arrival, entered the room. "Is it true," cried she, "that they are going to take my father to prison?" Gottlieb made no answer. "Holy Virgin!" she exclaimed, and ran to her father's house.

The horses of the gensdarmes were standing in

the yard. She rushed with frantic haste into the room, threw herself into her father's arms, implored his pardon, and offered to give up her whole fortune.

"You are my good angel," said he, somewhat moved. Dinah meanwhile had hidden herself. A sheet of stamped paper was instantly laid before Udilie: she signed her name upon it, and said to her father, "There, take it and write upon it what you please."

At this moment Gottlieb entered the room. "What have you done?" he cried: "you have ruined yourself, and I cannot marry a beggar." With these words he left the room.

Udilie fell upon her knees to pray; the gendarmes dried their tears and quitted the house, while Kauser kissed his daughter, and soon discovered that she was in a high fever. The whole village was in uproar. Udilie was carried to Matthew's house, where she lay sick for six weeks. Fritz frequently came to see her, which Gertrude could not do, as she had just lain in of a son. Dinah had indeed offered to take her into her house, but every

one felt that it would be unsafe to allow her to be near Udilie during her illness.

As soon as she had recovered, Udilie bade an eternal farewell to her own village, and went back to Gertrude, who had promised always to keep her. This time she travelled to Hatten on foot.

XVII.

“Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land.”—So says the Bible, and verily Udilie had her reward. A month after she had given up her fortune in favour of her father and his seven children, there came a letter from Paris from the joiner who had loved her so dearly, in which he informed her that he was already established as a master joiner and cabinet-maker, with a capital of four thousand francs, which he had saved, and that he was ready to marry her without a dowry; that he had made constant inquiries after her welfare, and had heard her fate; that he had loved her for more than six years, but that he only now dared to ask her to become his wife, as he had heard that she was

quite poor, and that he was quite sure she would be happy with him.

When Udilie had read this letter, she threw herself into Gertrude's arms. "The Lord will not forsake his people!" she exclaimed with tears of joy.

Gertrude wrote an answer, and undertook to celebrate the wedding brilliantly. The young joiner, Anthony, came from Paris, dressed like any lord, and married the good, gentle, pious Udilie. As she left the village, above two hundred people followed her as far as the great high-road, blessing her as they went.

"Behold, children," said the mothers to their daughters, "how the Lord rewards virtue!"

Udilie now lives at Paris, in the Faubourg Saint Antoine, and her husband is one of the richest cabinet-makers in the capital. She constantly sends presents to her father, who is now old. Gertrude's son is apprenticed to Anthony, and cannot speak a word of German, as Udilie took him with her when he was but five years old. Matthew is now an officer in the fifth regiment of Hussars, and is consoled. His brother has the house and the iron shop. Järi is dead :

his daughter closed his eyes after tending and honouring him like a good and faithful daughter. Fritz is the notary of Hatten, and Dinah plays the pious and repentant sinner in the village of Schirrhoffen.

CRAZY SELMEL.

Nor far from the village of Rohrwiller, in the midst of an oak coppice, there stands a mill called the Brook Mill, which has always been the richest in all Alsatia : it contains seven pairs of grindstones, seven stones for crushing hemp, and two sawmills ; and moreover, the whole district within a radius of two miles or more round the mill belongs to its owner, who until the Revolution was a nobleman. As each pair of stones brings in from thirty to forty sous per hour, without counting the crushing and sawmills, the profits amount to above thirty thousand francs a year. The mill is likewise a farm, upon which above a hundred labourers are constantly employed.

In the year 1828 this mill belonged to a rich pea-

sant, who, although he never stood for the Department at the elections—and indeed he could not even speak French—used to say with a laugh to the Jews who came to play at picquet with him, that he could buy out half the Chamber of Deputies if he had a mind. No one ever called him by his name,—most likely it was almost unknown; he was always called simply the Brookmiller.

Now this miller had an only daughter, called Salome, or, as the Alsations have it, Selmel; and it is the history of this girl that I am about to relate. I shall endeavour to adhere as strictly to the simple truth of nature as possible. Nature is everywhere the same, and the story of a heart is common to all who themselves have hearts,—that is, to nearly the whole of mankind.

Selmel had no other governess than her worthy mother, and nature; and though so rich, she had received no instruction beyond that which the village-schoolmaster of Rohrwiller could give her. In short,

she only differed from the ordinary village girls in her great kindness of heart, her resolute temper, which her tutor called obstinacy, and her dress, which was almost that of a town-bred young lady. She had reached her eighteenth year, and could hardly pronounce the few French phrases which the schoolmaster constantly repeated to her; neither could she understand arithmetic, nay more, she maintained that she never should learn it. She had a small harpsichord, which her father had bought at Strasburg for two hundred francs, and which was not worth fifty; but Selmel had little inclination to overcome the technical difficulties of playing on the piano, and she told her music-master, the same village pedagogue, that the instrument was out of tune, and that her father must send for a tuner from Strasburg before she could use it, that it would be too fatiguing for him to do it. But as she had a fine natural voice, and was fond of singing, she besieged him with entreaties, till he seated himself at the harpsichord to accompany her,—no easy task, for she kept neither time nor tune. She usually began with the Alsatian cuckoo song:—

“ Come out, Marie,
To welcome the spring,
To hear the hares purring,
To hear the birds sing!”

By degrees however she would slide into pathos, and sing the old and well-known song—

“ Thou, thou dwell’st in my heart—”

and it was easy to hear that she addressed the words to some one who was the true substantive, to whom the “Thou” referred. Accordingly the schoolmaster paused in his performance, let his hands drop motionless upon the dusty keys, turned his head round, and fixed upon his pupil an earnest and searching gaze, as though he had just made a most important discovery. Selmel burst out a-laughing, ran to the table, upon which lay a large old-fashioned Bible, and requested the schoolmaster to listen to her reading. Vainly did he assure her that he knew it all by heart; she replied that no one ever knew the story of Ruth or that of David well enough. The schoolmaster was not a little surprised, for she had read the Bible as they say behind his back; he desired her

to relate to him the history of David, and in so doing Selmel read aloud the passage which tells of David's feigned madness. She then ordered two of the farm servants to accompany the schoolmaster home to Rohrwiler; and he left the house shaking his head significantly.

Besides the Bible, Selmel had read a few books of chivalry which the miller's head man had brought her from Bischweiler, and this was her whole store of learning.

But if Selmel was ignorant, on the other hand she was richly gifted by nature. Many of my readers will smile when first among her merits I mention her good health. I must confess that it does not sound romantic, but many a town-bred miss that can speak four languages might have envied Selmel, who had never in her life complained of headache, toothache or indigestion, and who had never felt bored; except indeed at school, from which she often ran away to join the maids who were mowing or reaping, and to gather a bunch of blue cornflowers for her father in the field, or of wild strawberries for her mother in the wood.

She was not slender—indeed the Alsatian women seldom are—but finely grown ; her head was well set on and proudly carried, her nose short but well-formed, her lips full and pouting, her eyes as blue as the flame of the purest spirit, her hair chestnut, her complexion according to the time of year, pale in winter, brown in summer, and rosy red in spring and autumn ; her feet were small, and finally her mouth was indeed large, but it seemed as if her teeth had widened it only in order the better to show themselves. Of all this however Selmel knew nothing, and it had never entered her head to ask any one whether she were handsome. In town Selmel would have been a first-rate beauty.

When she laughed, it was with her whole body, but especially with her bosom, which in hot weather had ~~no~~ covering but a snow-white linen shift, which the girls in that part of the country wear drawn in round the throat with a string, as they have no stays.

The changes of countenance and the gestures of a country girl are more sudden and more intense than those of a town-bred girl. In the former the lines of the cheek, the drawing up of the eyebrow, the motion

of the hands, are all, as sculptors say, in the rough, but still they are of genuine mould. Moreover there are in the country a few born graces, peasant wenches who look as countesses ought to look, who carry nobility on their brow, and whose every step is in harmonious measure. Such was Selmel; all her motions were rapid, but perfectly finished; she never hesitated or blundered, and never broke anything; she had but one peculiar trick besides her manner of laughing, and this was, that she often drew up the right corner of her mouth with almost a sneer; upon this a stranger might have judged her to be cunning and malicious, whereas she was in reality only resolute, intelligent, and rather what is vulgarly called "deep."

Her parents had never refused her anything that she wished for, but then Selmel had no unusual desires. Thus she completed her eighteenth year almost un-awares. Such was Selmel, the rich heiress of the rich miller.

Candlemas had long since passed; all the spinning-wheels in the villages were put away one by one

in the loft ; the hempen and flaxen thread which had been spun upon them was carried to the weaver, and a bright March sun promised fine spring salad and early blossoms on the fruit-trees. The miller's large garden was already fresh-dug, and Selmel busied herself in it all day long. She had the footpaths bordered with box, and she herself edged round a heart with box in the middle of the garden, in order to plant her own flowers in it. The seedwomen from Baden and Würtemberg, who travel every year with the spring into Alsatia, often called upon her, and got well-paid for their ware, especially when they brought her the seeds of some new flower, which she had described to them in plain and expressive language, and which she never allowed to go into any hands but her own. The gooseberry and currant bushes were pruned, the vine trained afresh over the little arbour, and the new flowerbeds laid out ; for May was now near at hand, and the garden had to be dug anew,—a work which Selmel always superintended, and herself helped to execute. Her mother was not allowed to go into the garden till everything was finished, but her father walked up and down in

it with a smile of satisfaction, from time to time lending a hand to fix the new paling, made of fresh oak staves pointed at bottom, and hardened in the fire to prevent their rotting in the damp earth. The old miller had in his turn prepared a surprise for his daughter in the shape of a huge scarecrow, which he and his head man Gressian had manufactured in the barn, and which was to represent the fat burgomaster of Schildenberg* running after the chickens with a long wand in his hand, in order to drive them off the young wheat, which he fears they will tread down under their feet. It cost not a little trouble to stuff this straw man full enough, but Gressian exerted all his creative ingenuity in order to complete the work properly, and then said in a self-satisfied tone to his master, "Now we shall see Selmel laugh from head to foot again, and that so seldom happens."

Selmel chose two assistants from out the number of female day-labourers; moreover, Marie the cook and dairymaid, a beautiful girl from Herlsheim,

* For a history of the Schildbürger we must refer our readers to "*Der Schildbürger wunderseltame, abenteuerliche, unerhörte und bisher unbeschriebene Geschichten und Thaten.*"

begged as a great favour to be allowed to help to dig up the garden. For some time past Marie had lost the brilliant red from her cheeks; she had grown silent and reserved, and her song had ceased to resound in the spacious kitchen.

Let no one imagine that the country girls invariably combine innocence with their simplicity. At seventeen they have ceased to tremble if a lad kisses them, and will boldly take his arm out walking in sight of all the world, and yet they are so childish, and so ready to play at "Lauferl's," an Alsatian game which I will describe hereafter. Selmel, though herself as innocent as the babe unborn, made no exception to the general rule. It is true that none of the lads had yet dared to kiss the proud and wealthy Selmel, but she knew all the love adventures of the village, which are often of a kind that require to be veiled from modest eyes. In the country however folks call a spade a spade, and every child is known by its real name, even if it be a bastard.

The two women who were working by the day had

retreated to a turf bank in the corner of the garden, in order to eat up a pan of sour curds which Marie had brought them, and which they ladled out by alternate spoonfuls with such regularity that neither took a single spoonful more than the other. Meanwhile Marie thrust the broad spade vehemently into the ground, while Selmel broke the large clods with a rake.

Suddenly Marie threw up a large worm in a spadeful of earth, and was about to cut it in pieces with another stroke of the spade: the worm wriggled so violently, and crawled so quickly towards her who had power of life and death over it, as though it would beg her to spare its wretched life. Selmel, observing this, called out to Marie to let it go. "What harm has the worm done to you?" asked she; "don't you see how it makes itself small, that you may not hit it? It is lucky that you did not cut it in two at the first stroke." Marie looked full in her mistress' face, her eyes filled with tears, and she dropped the spade. "Why, what is the matter with you?" asked Selmel, "you look quite pale!"—"O Selmel!" sobbed she, "you are a good girl I am sure." She called her

thus by her name, as she had lived in the house for six years. "If you take pity on a worm, surely you will help me, for soon—" Though but just eighteen, Selmel had already guessed the truth. "Be quiet, Marie!" she replied; "take up the spade, and do as if nothing was the matter, for here come the two women." Selmel then took up a spade herself and began to dig close beside Marie. "Who is your sweetheart?" she asked in a low voice.—"Natzi, Gressian's brother, the head man at the hemp-mill," answered Marie. Selmel turned pale and said, "That is a bad job; will he marry you?"—"For the last fortnight he has not so much as looked at me; but do you tell his brother about it, for if he knows it Natzi must keep his word or Gressian will kill him." "How do you know Gressian so well?" asked Selmel slyly.—"Oh, who does not know him?" said Marie, "and as the best lad in all the country round?" "But Natzi is not Gressian," observed Selmel.—"No, if he were he would never have seduced me. O Selmel, don't reproach me! I can't tell how it came about, and you know you are only a girl yourself, and the parson always tells us that we are all weak

creatures; as to Natzi, I love him, and would have jumped into the Rhine to please him, and indeed now I suppose there is nothing else left for me to do.” “Hold your tongue,” said Selmel, “and go into your room; this work is not good for you. I will try to set everything right before my father and mother find out what is the matter, and if you are sent away,—for my father is very strict,—I will give you enough money for what you will want; and now go, and don’t cry, or you will make me cry too, and then my father will see it.”

The last words produced exactly the contrary effect to that which was intended, as is usually the case with children of nature; Marie burst out a-crying and threw her arms round Selmel’s neck, and the other two girls came running up and looked on in amazement. Selmel struggled to free herself from Marie’s embrace, but as she too was weeping, she had not strength to do so, and Marie’s grief growing every minute more eccentric, they ended by both tumbling down together. Spite of the tragical motive of the scene, they all hereupon began to laugh, especially the two hireling girls, and Selmel gave a new turn to the

whole affair by declaring that she had been wrestling with Marie to see which was the strongest. Marie now slunk away, while the two other girls brushed the dirt off Selmel's clothes, whereupon she went out of the garden into the yard.

Here she found the old miller and the village schoolmaster, sitting outside the window on a large block of oak. Selmel went up to her father and was about to kiss him, when he laid his hand upon her forehead and bent her head back, saying, "Why Selmel, your eyes are swimming in water!"—"Better so than in wine," replied she hastily; "does not our mill swim in water? and that brings in more than my eyes." Thus she turned the discourse from her tears.

"Do you know, Selmel, what the schoolmaster was just saying to me? he thinks it is time you should be married,—that you are growing too wise."

"And so our dear good schoolmaster wants to make a fool of me;—nay, nay, I will not marry quite yet."

Her father's face clouded over. "Mark you, Selmel," said he sternly, "I have never refused you anything, but in the matter of marrying you shall have no choice. If I say you shall marry,

married you shall be ; and if I say, you shall marry that man, you shall marry him and no other. Hitherto however it is only the schoolmaster that has said so.”—“Father,” cried Selmel’s mother from the window, “bid Selmel come in to dinner ; you have been chattering there long enough in all conscience,—the dinner will be cold.” When Selmel went in she gave her mother two hearty kisses.

Gressian the foreman at the mill was one of those men who usually become heroes in time of war. He was upright, sincere, proud and honest ; he had never received the slightest affront without severely resenting it, but he had never hurt a fly of his own accord. He made no distinctions between high and low, rich or poor ; his law was the old proverb, first come first served ; and he was so conscientious in his trade, that not a handful of pollard was ever kept in the mill that did not strictly belong to it.

Natzi his brother, who had the management of the hemp-mill, was quite another sort of man. In his department he had mostly to do with girls, who bring

their hemp to be beaten, and are incessantly walking round the stone to turn the hemp under the rapidly revolving hammer,—a dangerous task for those who are not quick and handy. Now when a handsome girl came with a few hundredweight of hemp, the merry Natzi was so very kind as to turn the hemp himself, for which of course he received all kinds of thanks. Gressian on the contrary never was merry, but almost always cheerful and good-humoured; he answered everyone calmly, and never had any dispute with the peasants who came to the mill to get their corn ground. Accordingly under his management the Brookmill gained such a reputation as it never had enjoyed before.

The two brothers were much alike in person, although Gressian was by a good deal the elder; but the turn of features which gave Gressian's face an expression of pleasant humour, in Natzi's was changed by some imperceptible difference to a look of malignant irony. Natzi seemed always to smile, whereas Gressian looked habitually grave. To compare small things with great, this difference is most strongly marked in the two faces, otherwise so

like, of Francis I. and Henri IV. of France: it is a variety which I have often observed in very strong family likenesses, and which in my experience has always revealed corresponding varieties of character. To return however to my tale. The two brothers belonged to a respectable peasant's family, with but a small estate.

When Gressian went out, which he seldom did except on Sundays to church, he always went to see his uncle, the stepbrother of his late mother, who lived at Rohrwiller, and to chat awhile with him. He never went to the village dances, never got drunk, and never played at cards,—vices which are almost universal in Alsatia. While he talked over the affairs of the parish, and sometimes even those of the state, with his uncle, his cousin Kate watched for the words as they fell from his lips; but although Kate was a beautiful girl, he never made love to her. This surprized even Kate's father, and he would sometimes say to his nephew, "Well, Gressian, when shall we begin to think of getting married?" Gressian answered quietly, "I do think of it, but I shall not marry." "Do not you know, father," whispered

Kate, "that Gressian is proud, and has high notions in his head? 't is pity that he was not born a great gentleman." Her father understood her hint, while Gressian affected not to hear what she said, and continued, "I can't marry,—I am but a servant, and a poor one." "What does that matter?" replied his uncle; "there are not many such young fellows as you, Gressian; your poor dear mother always used to say, 'My boy Gressian will be somebody one of these days;' and I am proud of you too, let me tell you. You are now thirty—'tis high time you should take a wife. Come, what say you, if you like my Kate you shall have her, and she is an only child, as well as Selmel, though not so rich." "Nor so handsome," added Kate, with a significant glance at Gressian. Gressian was offended at these words. "What has Selmel to do with the matter?" replied he hastily: "I have no thoughts of marrying as yet, that is all." "Hark you, Gressian," continued his uncle in rather a lower voice, "if you have got any thoughts of Selmel into your head, I think you are no better than a fool: the Brookmiller will never give you his daughter; he wants some fine gentleman from Stras-

burg for a son-in-law ; besides, at the mill you are a servant, and here you are Gressian of Sesenheim. Moreover Selmel has all manner of grand, flighty ways ; she drives out with two horses, rows upon the river in a painted boat, wears fine bonnets, and sings to the harpsichord ; whereas my Kate spins hemp, works in the field, and drives the plough when there 's need : it is not hard to choose which of them would make the best wife to a working man. And as for the rest, you would always find enough here for both of you to live upon. If on the other hand what Kate tells me is true, namely that you have fallen in love with Selmel, why then I am sorry for you.—Now you may go, and this day twelvemonth I will offer you my daughter once more,—she will then be nineteen ; but after that I will say no more till you come to me with the tears in your eyes, and beg and pray me to give you my daughter to wife, if she is still single and is still in the mind to have you. Then indeed I will consider of it. Now you may go.” Gressian returned home to the mill, and Kate went with him to visit her friend Selmel, for Selmel had chosen Gressian's cousin Kate to be her friend, though no

one could guess why. The conversation between Gressian and Kate on the road is easy to relate,—neither spoke a word to the other.

When Gressian and Kate entered the mill-yard Selmel was standing on the doorstep. A slight blush overspread her face, but no one observed it, and she called out to Kate, “You are come in the very nick of time ; I was just going to send for you. It is a beautiful evening, the river is pretty full, and we will go a-fishing ; Gressian and Natzi will row the boat, and everything is ready, even to the full moon.” Gressian objected that he could not spare the time ; but Selmel insisted, as she said that Natzi was too harum-scarum to take care of them alone, and somehow Gressian could refuse her nothing long. Kate agreed to the plan directly, under the sole condition that nobody should tell her father anything of the matter, which the rest accordingly promised her not to do.

The Zorn, which turned the mill, is a narrow but rather deep stream, which frequently overflows its banks, and is then navigable by row-boats. This

was a pleasure which Selmel often enjoyed, as she was well able to row herself. Her boat was painted, as has already been observed, and there was an awning at the end of it to keep off the rain.

Presently Natzi came up from the river-side, singing merrily, and informed his brother that all was ready, and that he intended to catch a great quantity of trout. At other times he was fain to be content with tench, which Marie fried in butter for him. He little guessed what manner of fish would be fried for him this time.

Gressian got into the boat, though somewhat against the grain. Selmel and Kate presently followed, and lastly Natzi jumped in, and they pulled stoutly up against the stream. Selmel, who had her own peculiar object in view, began to taunt Kate with being unable to row,—a deficiency which Kate would not admit; and as she was resolved not to be outdone by her friend, or, as she considered her, her rival, in anything, she took the oar: meanwhile, instead of trout, Natzi caught nothing but frogs, which made Selmel laugh so violently, whether she would or no, that her laughter made the whole boat rock. The moon rose

clear and bright, and lit up the group in the boat with its pale beams; the lights of the surrounding villages gleamed on every side, and from time to time some peasant, who was going homewards along the side of the stream, stood still in order to watch the result of the fishery.

"Are you tired, Kate?" said Selmel: "if you are, lie down upon the dry bench under the awning, and I will row." "No," said Gressian, "give the oar to me." Kate laid herself down and pretended to sleep, for she had secretly observed that Selmel had some object of her own in view, and she wanted to watch her, and to overhear her conversation. A long pause ensued, during which Natzi threw out his net, and caught three frogs in succession. "Natzi has more luck in catching girls than fish," said Selmel suddenly. "Oh, how sharp Selmel is grown!" he replied. "Hush!" she continued, looking round at Kate, in order to assure herself that she was really asleep. "What do you think, Gressian, of a lad who seduces a poor girl and then forsakes her?" Natzi changed colour and threw down the net, and Gressian pulled his oar into the boat, which he thus allowed

to float down the stream. "What do you mean by that?" he asked. "Fiddle-faddle!" cried Natzi; "nonsense and stuff." "What, are you going to swagger and talk big, you good-for-nothing rascal?" retorted Selmel hastily; "you know very well what it is that I am talking about." "But what has happened, Selmel?" asked Gressian: "if my brother has done anything bad, I will drown him here with my own hands before we get back to the mill." "That is just what grieves me most," replied Selmel, with the tears rolling down her cheeks. "It grieves me so that your brother should be the man to do such a thing; only think, poor Marie is with child by him!" At these words Gressian turned pale, and then shame and anger rose crimson to his forehead, and he snatched up the oar which lay by his side. Natzi, who feared him as if he were a god, on seeing this did not hesitate for a moment, but jumped straight into the water. Gressian hurled the oar furiously at him, and struck him on the head so that the stream was reddened with his blood. Spite of the wound however Natzi was on the bank in a moment, just as Kate woke, or pretended to wake,

and looked all aghast. "Throw me the oar this minute," shouted Gressian, "you scoundrel, throw me the oar, or I'll jump in after you and strangle you!" Kate screamed aloud for help, as the boat was whirled hither and thither down the stream. Selmel never winced; she was secretly exulting in Gressian's just anger. Natzi put his hand to his head, felt his wound, hesitated for a minute or two what to do,—but he did not dare to disobey his brother, and so jumped again into the river, caught the oar and flung it back into the boat, trying to hit Selmel with it. Gressian caught it however and saved her; but though Selmel had perceived her danger she remained silent, and did not thank Gressian. "Mind you do not let me see you for the next three months!" shouted Gressian after his brother; "for if you do, you may order a funeral mass for yourself beforehand." "I daresay," retorted Natzi from the bank, "you are in such a rage with me, and all because that proud, uppish Selmel has put some nonsense into your head. But you won't get her, not if you try ever so; for she is the daughter of the rich miller, and you are only his

man. Well, I shall go and seek another place ; but who will pay you for working like a horse, you fool ? I suppose the pleasure of rowing Selmel in her boat is wages enough for you !” Natzi would never have had the courage to say all this at any other time ; but now he poured out his fury against his brother, and then he set off and ran as fast as his legs could carry him towards the village of Herlsheim.

Kate was secretly delighted at this scene. The three who were left in the boat returned to the mill without exchanging a word with each other : when they landed, Gressian commanded Kate not to say a word about all that had taken place.

On the following day Marie was sent quietly out of the house ; Gressian gave her the means of getting herself nursed and taken care of in a neighbouring village, and Selmel also assisted her in secret.

A week later Gressian heard that his brother had become foreman of a mill near Strasburg. He sent him his clothes, with the order never to appear before him again until he had married Marie, and made an honest woman of her. Selmel’s parents remained in ignorance of the whole transaction.

"No tree falls at the first stroke" is an old and true adage among the peasantry. The poor forsaken Marie did wisely in not pursuing her false lover. She privately bore him a son, who was christened by his name; and trusting in God's mercy, she still hoped some day to be restored to honour, and in the meantime she took a place as servant, not far from her native village. Since then the summer's sun had tinged many a face with brown. Bilberries, blackberries and strawberries by turns succeeded to the place of honour on the peasant's table, and the girls of the village frequently left the haymaking to go and pick bilberries. Ten or a dozen girls of various ages, accompanied by a few boys, start, each provided with a longish glazed earthenware jar, round the neck of which they twist a rope by way of a handle. They are mostly barefooted, or at any rate without stockings, and thus equipped they penetrate into the wood which is not far from the village. The various bearings of the wide-spread forest are as familiar to them as the pathways of the sea are to the sailor. They know exactly which part has already been cleared, and usually, as on most other occasions

in life, they pass over that which lies nearest to them in order to reach some far distant part of the forest. Many a blackberry is swallowed by the way, many a bilberry-bush wantonly trodden underfoot. Here and there appears a strawberry-plant, which as if by a wonder is still covered with fruit and blossom, although the insatiable caravan passes it every day. Now they drink with delight at a little fountain, gather cowslips, and pluck the leaves of daisies to ascertain the sentiments of their lovers ; while some tell each other the scandalous stories of the village, and others follow the troop in thoughtful silence, swinging their jars in their hands. At length the right spot is reached ; a giant oak is chosen as the trysting-place ; every one of the party places her large jar at the foot of the tree, takes a little mug out of the bottom of it, and fastens it round her waist with a rope passed through the handle. In a trice the whole party is scattered abroad in the wood in all directions : they pluck the berries with both hands, stooping as they go, and put them all into the mug without eating one by the way. As soon as the mug is full, they return to the tree to empty its contents

into the large jar. It is very seldom that any of them lose their way ; they want no compass to guide them ; they observe the particular trees, the inequalities of the ground, the physiognomy of the branches, the hewn stumps, and the like, and thus they always find their way. Sometimes they fill their jars in common, one after the other ; but let the harvest fall out as it may, the bilberry caravan never starts on its homeward journey till all its members without exception have assembled with what treasures they may have collected. If one of the party were purposely to absent herself, she would never be allowed to join the expedition again. At the end each plucks a branch of the bilberry, one for her little cousin, another for her baby brother, and another again for her child ; and strawberries are sought wherewith to make brilliant red ornaments upon the black bilberries. A bit of coloured ribbon is then often twisted round the rope-handle of the jar, and the homeward journey begins, enlivened by singing. The party never fails however to rest two or three times by the way at fixed stations, which are usually the cool springs, where they quench their thirst with

the clear water drunk out of the hollow of their hands.

One day Marie wished to eat some bilberry tart, and resolved to gather the berries for it herself. Twice she filled her mug, and the third time she found a region so fruitful in bilberries on the slope of a hill-lock, that she had not hands enough to gather them. Whenever she stooped to pluck a berry she saw a still larger, blacker, more juicy one beside it. The choice became painful to her, and she plucked them with frantic enthusiasm, rushing from one bush to another ; and whereas it generally took her half an hour to fill her mug, it was now done in ten minutes. But alas, poor Marie ! her eagerness had drawn her too far from the trysting-oak : the place where she was seemed strange to her, and while she thought that she was approaching the tree, she was in fact going still further away from it. In her eagerness after the bilberries she had, instead of turning her back to the tree, kept her face towards it ; and now that she wished to return, she went further away from it. After walking on for about half an hour, she at length stopped, but as yet she was not frightened ;

she thought she should easily find her way again; besides a village girl is not so easily alarmed.

At length however Marie completely lost sight of the bilberry hillock: she found herself in an unknown neighbourhood, and in the distance she heard the heavy blows of the woodcutter's axe from some woodman who must be in what there goes by the name of the *coupe*. She stood still, and loudly called the names of all the women and girls belonging to her party; but only the echo answered her. As yet however she was not disheartened; but when, soon after, the sun went down, her heart began to beat. The sound of the axes ceased, and there was now nothing to guide her. With the speed of a startled deer Marie ran to the part of the forest where trees were being felled, but that part was three or four miles in circumference, and evening was quickly closing in. "Hollo! ho!" cried she repeatedly, "help, good man, help!" but no one answered her. Now first her woman's nature asserted its rights: everything swam before her eyes; all the woodcutters seemed already to have gone home to a strange village, to which she knew not the way. In her giddy

terror she fancied herself surrounded by wolves, serpents and foxes; and losing all her presence of mind, she threw herself upon the ground and began to sob aloud. "My poor baby," she lamented, "my poor child will be thirsty, and little Stasi can give it nothing to drink; O God help me! that I may soon get back to my child, and I never will leave it for so long again." It then occurred to her to pray, and by the time she had repeated the Lord's prayer, she saw smoke curling up between the trees in the distance. By this time it was twilight, and the trees were whispering their evening prayers. To jump up, gird her apron round her body, throw away the bilberries, and run with the speed of lightning in the direction of the smoke, was the work of a moment. She presently stood breathless before a hut, which usually served as a dwelling to the forest-guard. It was built of rough logs, covered over with earth, so that it looked like a hollow mound. Such huts as this were commonly built by the charcoal-burners, and they are still to be found in many parts of Alsatia.

Marie was now met by another difficulty: she could see no door, for that too is covered with clay

and osiers, so that when it falls to from the slanting roof of the hut, it cannot be distinguished from the wall. She crept round the hut seeking the entrance, when she suddenly heard men's voices within; she laid her ear close against the wall, and distinguished the words, "Follow suit." These words were several times repeated, and the voice sounded familiar to her ear. She listened with redoubled attention, and felt almost sure that it was the voice of her Natzi. But how came he to be in the forest hut, while he was miller's man twelve miles off? Other voices replied, a dispute arose, the word cheat was uttered,—then a heavy blow, shouts and groans, oaths; and the noise grew so loud, that she could soon hear every word the people said,—how they were fighting, and how one of them cried out as if he were mortally wounded. She ran round the hut like a lioness, pushed against the wall with both hands, and at length succeeded in finding the door and in raising it up, spite of its enormous weight. When she stepped in she saw four men, all bloody from fighting, one of whom was Natzi, who lay senseless in the corner. The men started as she came in, and remained silent and quiet.

Marie ran to her Natzi, raised him up, and wiped the blood and sweat from his forehead. When he recovered his consciousness and saw Marie, he fancied that he was dead and in heaven, where he was to render an account. Presently however the sight of his comrades reminded him that he was still upon earth.

"It is not enough," they went on to say, "that this humbugging fellow must cheat at cards, but he must also seduce all the girls in the village, and then forsake them. He got one into trouble at Rohrwiller in that way, and now he wants to cheat us of our money, in order that he may give the horses with which he has to fetch wood some oats, because he has drunk all his master's oat-money by the way."

"That is all a lie!" cried Marie: "Natzi is my brother, and not so bad as you make him out. Are not you ashamed to fight three against one? you need not be so proud of having beaten him."

"Upon my word," replied Michael, "I did not know where I hit. I think, Fritz, you got more than one thump upon the nose when we began to deal out clubs."

"But you little witch," said Fritz to Marie, "how

came you here ? how did you manage to break open the door, which was fastened inside ?”

“ Why,” said she, “ I thought my brother was sitting here and playing at cards : it is forbidden in the tavern, and so you come and hide yourselves in the wood, you good-for-nothing fellows !”

“ Upon my word,” said Michael, “ you are right ; and here is Anthony with a mouth which looks as if he would drink up the Rhine, but it is only swelled. We are a bad set of fellows, not worth a farthing all put together. Come, Natzi, give up the card,—it was only in fun.”

But Natzi made no answer : the whole thing seemed to him like a dream, and he had so much pain in his head, which was still bleeding fast, that he had no relish left for fun.

“ Marie ! Marie !” at this moment sounded in several directions from afar, and the forest echo repeated the name ten or twenty times, according as the caller was a man or a woman. It was the bilberry-picking party seeking for Marie, and which, spite of the advance of night, would not return to the village without her. Marie loudly answered “ Here.” But

in order to prevent the company from reaching the spot where she then was, she ran to meet them. She drew Natzi with her out of the hut ; and he, ashamed and humbled by her conduct, invited her to accompany him to the village, where his cart and horses were standing, in order to chat with him.

"And don't you ask after your child?" said she reproachfully. "You have no further to come to me than I to go to you. Do you come to me tomorrow."

"I will come, Marie," replied Natzi, "and very soon we will be married, or I shall become good for nothing ; I see that more plainly every day."

"Now go," said Marie ; "for if the people saw you with me, they would say that I had been found going after a man. Oh, people are so ill-natured ! Good night." With these words Marie started off in a different direction, loudly shouting "Here !" and joined her party again. When they got home, almost all the village came out to meet them, having thought they were lost.

For nearly three months Gressian had never left his mill, except to go to church on Sunday. He had neither visited his uncle and Catherine, nor entered

his master's parlour, and had avoided the presence of Selmel as much as possible. She was not slow to observe this, and on her part she avoided him, for she knew that it was his wish. But she likewise avoided every other pleasure, save only that of sometimes strolling in the wood with her mother, and tending her trees and flowers. But the restless girl seemed now again to take especial delight in working in the fields; and when the haymaking came, she went out into the fields every day with the maids, helped them to turn and gather the grass, drank out of their water-jug, ate their bread, partook of their sour curds and butter-milk, and even wore the broad-brimmed straw hat of the country, though she had got a fine Leghorn one. Selmel had her own reasons for all this. For some time past the village school-master had come very often to see her father, and then there was a great deal of talk of a certain Herr Knoterer from Strasburg; and Selmel shrewdly suspected that it was intended she should become a town lady,—a fate for which she did not seem to have any great inclination.

One morning, on which the sun had risen burning

hot, the old miller asked his wife why he now saw nothing of Gressian : he said the water was so low that the mill had stood still these two days ; he supposed that master foreman went out to amuse himself, while he might just as well take a turn at the haymaking and save a labourer's hire.

But Selmel's mother replied that Gressian was only hired for the mill, and was too proud to work in the fields. She warned her husband to take care what he said to him, for that Gressian was the favourite of the whole neighbourhood, and moreover very touchy.

"Why, what next?" exclaimed Selmel: "I will lay anything, that if you ask him, dear mother, he will go with us to the hayfield. Besides he is our servant, and we can make him do what we like, can't we, father?"

"Why, Selmel," said the old miller, "what a vixen you have grown ! you that always used to be so soft-hearted. However you are quite right. If things are to go on so, why it is Gressian that is the master and I that am the man. I have not seen him these two months : what is he about up there in the mill?"

"I tell you again," replied Selmel's mother, "that

if you say a harsh word to him he will leave the mill, and that is just what every miller in the neighbourhood would be glad to see. Natzi, good for nothing as he was, took away more than one good customer when he went; but if Gressian goes, then goodbye to the mill! the river may wait a long time before it has anything to do, for the peasants are not fond of you, good man,—you are too high and mighty to please them, and you talk to nobody but the school-master, who flatters only the rich. However I will tell Gressian to go to the haymaking, but do you hold your tongue, and you too Selmel.” As she said this, she made a sign of intelligence with her finger to her daughter; for how could a girl like Selmel have kept any secret from so kind a mother?

“Only leave it all to my mother,” said Selmel coaxingly to her father; she knows best how to manage everything.”

“Yes, yes,” replied he; but I must not forget what I had to say, Selmel. There is a gentleman coming from Strasburg very soon who wants to marry you; we shall see. If he pleases me you shall marry him. But mind that you are nicely dressed now

every day. If he is a fool, a sawney, you need not be afraid: I know your taste."

"My taste?" inquired Selmel; "why don't you know, father, that I am but a foolish girl, and that I like a good, handsome country lad much better than a townsman? If indeed I understood French, or could talk finely like a lady, I should be glad enough to live in the town. But don't you remember, father, how the people laughed at me in the theatre at Strasburg, because I shrieked when the white marble statue in the opera nodded its head? Well, since that I never could bear the town."

"If that be all," replied the old miller, "you may stay here; I only want you to marry a rich man, who is somebody, a maire, a general or a deputy. Why you will be richer than any of those fine folks; and then the people will say, 'Only think, the Brook-miller's Selmel is going to marry such and such a great man! yes, yes, he can afford it:' and that is what I like."

Meanwhile Selmel's mother came back, and announced that Gressian was going today into the hay-field. "But in order that it may not look as if he

was going as a labourer, you Selmel will go with him," added the kind mother.

"What care I?" said the old miller; "I am going out into the hayfield myself: there is nothing to do at home just now; so make haste and bring the coffee, and Gressian may have some with us, as your mother seems to think him unlike other folks."

But Gressian, though he had consented to go into the hayfield, declined the honour of the coffee, under the pretext that he had already breakfasted. The cart stood ready at the door, with the two grey horses snorting and pawing with impatience under the hot sun. Selmel filled the water-jar with wine; some of the maids and men presently scrambled up into the cart, among them Selmel and Gressian, and away they went into the hayfield.

They had scarce been half an hour in the field, and had raked up only a few haycocks, when Natzi and Marie arrived arm in arm. Great was Selmel's rejoicing at the sight. Natzi went straight up to his brother, who was standing in the cart loading the hay, and announced to him that he was going to marry Marie, the sooner the better. This joyful

meeting caused a long pause in the work. Selmel called together all the work-people. Presently the sound of the merciless scythe was heard no more; the regular clank of the whetstone was silent; here the haycock was left to its fate, there the rake was thrown aside, and all ran to the spot which Selmel had chosen for a social drinking-place. The contents of the little barrel were soon exhausted, for the thirst of the haymakers was greater than their work, and there was health and prosperity to drink to the new couple. Presently they began to roll upon the grass, to tumble in the hay; one cut himself a pipe of thick oat-straw, another crowded artistically by blowing on two blades of grass; in short, all were indulging in the wildest merriment; even the horses neighed aloud, and only Gressian retained his usual gravity, and talked in a low voice with his brother. Suddenly Selmel exclaimed, "Who is coming up there? three men—

"Three gallant tailors crossed the Rhine."

Jesus and Mary! it is my father, the schoolmaster, and somebody else. Get to work again quickly, good people, or we shall all catch it: there comes my

father." In a moment every one had seized up some implement : Selmel began tossing hay with as much vehemence as if she had been paid for it, Gressian stood in the cart, and Natzi pitched up the hay to him. When that haycock was carted, Natzi drove the cart to the spot where Selmel was at work alone. Presently her father arrived with his companions, and introduced his daughter and his hayfield to the strange gentleman. He was all impatience to upbraid Natzi, but was prevented by the presence of the stranger. Selmel dropped an eccentric curtsy, and went on with her haymaking. The stranger immediately entered into conversation with her, for he was much taken by her appearance : no wonder, for there was no denying that Selmel was uncommonly handsome and charming for a country girl.

"Do people use any hay in the town?" asked she intentionally, not naively, of her admirer ; for that he was an admirer she had guessed immediately. "No doubt," replied the gentleman : we have asses in town as well as in the country." "You don't say so," replied she ; "I thought there were none but wise people in town." "Oh no," he answered.

"Oh I believe you," said she quickly; "but the wise people usually stay there." The stranger bit his lip. "Selmel!" growled her father; but she took no heed of him, and went on. "I am very sorry, sir, that I have nothing to offer you; we have drunk all the water, and I have nothing left for you but my rake; there, take it, and I will look on." The smartly dressed strange gentleman stood as if he were bewitched. "Are you mad?" cried her father; "is that the way to treat a great gentleman?" The schoolmaster stood silent and aghast. "Gressian!" cried Selmel, "come down; the gentleman is thirsty, we will drive him to the river!" and she laughed so loud that Gressian himself knew not what to say. The strange gentleman could not understand what this all meant, and whispered with the schoolmaster, who kept continually shrugging his shoulders.

"Selmel," muttered her father, "if you go on so, I will box your ears." But Selmel did not listen. She still shook with laughter, and at length began to sing the song of the three tailors at the very top of her voice. Her father now kept his word, and boxed her ears; but the stranger ran up to him, exclaiming

to him, "Unhappy father, don't you see that your daughter is mad, that she has lost her senses; send for a doctor,—that is better than blows. As for me, I wish you a very good morning, and beg that you will order my char-a-banc to drive round, that I may return home."

At the words "mad," "lost her senses," all the labourers burst out laughing. Selmel herself laughed heartily, took her box on the ear in good part, but did not utter another syllable during the whole of the day. The stranger went away, and Selmel staid in the field. But as she persisted in moody silence, the people began to think there must be some truth in what the gentleman had said. From time to time she cast a deep fixed look at Gressian, who alone understood her, but had not the courage, or rather was too proud to tell her so. Selmel drove home with her father and the schoolmaster, while Gressian followed quite alone in the haycart. Her mother was frightened, her father furious. Selmel was confined to her room by sickness for a week, and then reappeared fully recovered.

Some of our readers will perhaps ask why Selmel and Gressian, who undoubtedly loved each other, never ventured to explain their mutual passion to one another. The characters of countryfolks however are harsher and more stubborn ; and though their hearts are more open, their passions are deeper and stronger, and their prejudices more powerful than with townspeople. The inhabitants of small country towns hold an intermediate place, and proudly exhibit the absurdities and prejudices of both town and country. A nation composed only of towns or of villages might be said to have no prejudices, because all its prejudices would become the custom, *i. e.* the law. As it is, the one ridicules all that the other holds most sacred ; and town and country, let folks say what they will, are secret foes. The worst of all is a country containing a great number of small towns, because they only subsist by egotism, the grandfather of all prejudices, and because in a word they are governed by petty tyrants who fancy themselves the rulers of the world.

Selmel would have sunk into the earth sooner than own her love to Gressian ; for Selmel was a true

country girl, intelligent but conceited, and Gressian was her servant, whilst she had hundreds of thousands of francs at her disposal. Nature indeed takes no heed of such distinctions, but prejudice is stronger than nature, and frequently overcomes and kills her, or, if not kills, at any rate strikes her dumb. Selmel did not even open her heart to her mother, although she knew all, and only kept silence because she saw that a single word would aggravate the wound.

On the other hand, Gressian was far too proud to endure the thought of being refused. As to seducing the girl, he would far rather have been crushed between her father's millstones. Should he confess his love to her? No, thought he, she shall make the beginning,—she must know that I love her. Neither would he leave the house, for fear of exposing Selmel's feelings to the whole village. There was not a girl in the village that would not have felt malicious pleasure at their marriage, and that, instead of rejoicing at Selmel's happiness, would not have exulted and triumphed at her father's disappointment, and in the downfall of his pride of purse. Then again

Gressian resolved that the village should not have it to say that Gressian had courted a rich girl, and was sent away with a flea in his ear.

Selmel herself guessed all this, and secretly rejoiced in the character of her lover, though she dared not tell him so. She resolved only to wait, and meanwhile she fed her love upon hope. Furthermore, in her innocence she determined to get rid of all her lovers, by any means she could find, never mind what. The story of David's feigning madness in order to save his life, which she had read a hundred times, gave her the idea of acting insanity; but the village girl did not consider the consequences. How was she to keep up the part towards her parents? and how could she be sure that Gressian would see through her game, and likewise wait. She knew that Kate was in love with him, and that his uncle wished to have him for a son-in-law. However she left everything to chance, and the folks in the village began to say that Selmel had grown melancholy.

That day spent in the meadow was the last of her happiness: the decision of her fate became every day more imminent. Natzi came to the house on

the following day, re-entered the service of the Brook-miller, who gladly received him, and announced that he should celebrate his wedding at the end of a fortnight. Gressian's feelings of pride would have led him to make the wedding as brilliant as possible; but this would have been contrary to maidenly custom in Marie's case; however he gave a dance for the young people. The village schoolmaster, whom Selmel now no longer caused to be accompanied home, frequently came to call, but his former pupil never spoke a word to him. He attributed this to her melancholy, but it arose in fact from contempt. The schoolmaster played the part of go-between. He had ten children to feed, and only three hundred francs a-year from government, and two hundred from the parish, and by this means he could earn two or three hundred francs at once, and without trouble. Selmel could not refuse to be present at Natzi's wedding, for she had already forgiven him for throwing the oar at her, and she even determined, as Natzi knew her secret, to open her heart to him altogether; whereupon he said to her, "Selmel, I will do anything:" indeed, at a nod from her, he would

without flinching have committed the greatest crime or made the greatest sacrifice.

On Natz's wedding-day Kate's father drove over the bridge of the mill. Gressian stood above the mill-race, and Selmel at the house-door. Kate's father was standing up in the cart holding the reins in his hand. "Gressian," cried he, "won't you have Kate yet? I offer her to you today for the last time, and I will wait six months more, for the girl cries after you:—after that you may come and beg for her, but in vain; for," said he, casting a glance at Selmel, "your plans, Gressian, are all bubbles. The world will always be the same, and the Brookmiller is one thing and Gressian quite another. I do but speak my mind,—no offence I hope.—Gee up!" And he cracked his whip and started off for Rohrwiller full gallop—a thing which had never happened to his horses before. Gressian made no answer, and Selmel also remained silent.

When Gressian waltzed with Kate at the dance in which he was forced to take part, the jealousy of Selmel, who was present as a spectator in her character of bridesmaid, was roused. Nature conquered

her pride, and she began to dance first with Natzi, to the astonishment of all the lads and lasses. Then Natzi whispered to Gressian, who thereupon took courage and asked her to dance; but in so doing changed colour a dozen times. She did not refuse. Gressian danced like a hero, with grace, dignity and agility, and Selmel flew along with him. In the whirl of the dance he pressed her to his heart, pushed through the crowd with the trembling girl, whose heart danced for joy in her bosom; his arms spoke instead of his lips the words "I love you!" and her timid sufferance rendered an answer needless. Thus for the first time they spent a few happy moments together. When the waltz was at an end, and Gressian led her into the supper-room, she turned pale; and as she sat down, she let her arm fall upon the shoulder of her partner, exclaiming with a sigh, "O Gressian!" This was the only word of love that she addressed to him, but her whole soul was in the tone of her voice. Gressian was just gathering courage to answer her, when a maid came to fetch Selmel away from the dance in her father's name, as some strange gentleman had arrived. This news dis-

pelled the sweet illusion of the moment. Gressian left the dance, and Kate went home in tears.

This time it was the Sous-prefet of Weissenburg, an impoverished nobleman, who sued for the hand of the rich miller's daughter. She had been promised to him beforehand, and he came, not to woo, but to see whether he should condescend so far as to carry the girl home as his bride. He arrived carelessly dressed, in a one-horse chaise, and smiled contemptuously at the whole household, while the hundreds of thousands of francs of which the old miller boasted nevertheless tickled his fancy very agreeably. When he saw Selmel, who came home flushed from dancing, he started. "If I only get her properly dressed and drilled," thought he, "she will eclipse all the women in Weissenburg." "*Le fait est,*" he muttered, *qu'elle a une taille à ravir ; c'est un beau corps de femme. Allons, je l'émanciperai et je l'épouserai.*" Thus he soliloquized in French, for his German was still worse than that of the Brookmiller. But Selmel passed him by without a greeting. That evening, the morning, and another evening passed over, and Selmel had not uttered a syllable. The Sous-

prefet fancied she was obstinate, and said he knew all about that already; it would soon go off. Her father privately gave her several boxes on the ear, and her mother looked on in silence. Two days passed thus, and Selmel had not yet opened her lips. At length the cunning young Prefect imagined a new stratagem. At dinner in Selmel's presence he reproached her father with having written him word that his daughter was handsome and well brought up, whereas she was in reality ugly and ill-bred. The trick almost succeeded. Selmel made a movement of impatience, her lips quivered, but she checked herself in time, and determined to be revenged. No woman ever forgives an affront,—no not even were she brought up in Paraguay. She forgets love and hate sooner than an affront.

That evening Selmel talked for a long time and very earnestly with Natzi.

At midnight three strapping fellows went into the Prefect's room, took him out of bed, threatened him with death if he uttered a sound, tied a rope round his body, carried him to the bank of the river, and dipped him three times in the foaming current of the

mill-race. Hereupon they carried him back to bed, covered him up warm, and wished him good evening in the name of the bride. The ringleader in this frolic was Natzi. Next morning the Prefect swore at the whole house, threatened them with an action, only he had no witnesses, and ordered his carriage to be brought round. When this was done, it was discovered that his horse had been shaved so clean, that not a hair was left upon its whole body. Even the old miller laughed himself almost into a fit, and the Prefect fell sick of a bilious fever. "Look you," cried Natzi after him as he drove away, "that is how village folks get rid of troublesome suitors."

The old miller was accustomed every evening before he went to bed to strip to his shirt and drawers, and in that costume to sit in an arm-chair and talk or play at cards for an hour. His card companions from Herlsheim often slept at the mill, in order to play at picquet with him till late at night. On the present evening however he had no thought of cards, but sat in his great chair with his hands resting

upon the arms, as deeply sunk in thought as though he were about making some great discovery. His wife was already in bed. Suddenly he started up, looked at her sharply, and asked, "I say, old woman, don't you recollect ever having had any mad person in your family?" "Why, what can put such a thought into your head?" replied she, sitting up in bed and putting her nightcap to rights. "Folks say," answered he, "that our Selmel is crazy, and from all that I see of her I have a great mind to believe it is true. She goes about without saying a word, minds what nobody says to her, and drives away all the best matches that I can find for her." "Why you old fool," cried she, "you think yourself so wise, and know everything that goes on at Paris, and yet you can't see what is the matter in your own house. Have not you observed that Selmel likes Gressian—that she is over head and ears in love with him?"

The old miller started back as if he had received an electric shock, and flung his chair beneath the table. "In love with Gressian—with our servant—and you never told me so till now! She owned it to you I'll be bound, for you were always as soft as

butter : is it not so ? Did not she cry, and did not you give her some hopes ? I had rather see her laid in her coffin than give her to my servant for a wife. A pretty marriage that would be indeed !”

“Selmel has said nothing to me about it,” said her mother, “but I have perceived it for a long time. Besides she is her father’s own child ; she is proud and obstinate, and to the best of my belief she will marry nobody else, and not let herself be driven.”

“What !” shouted the old miller, “you yourself believe that ! the fellow shall leave my house this instant ; not another night shall he sleep under my roof. I will go up and drag him out of bed myself, or who knows but the rascal may seduce my daughter, so that I shall be ashamed to show my face ?” So saying he had already opened the door, when the old mother sprung out of bed like a young girl, clasped her husband round the waist, dragged him back into the room and shut the door.—“And you really have the face to ask,” cried she, “whether anybody in my family was ever mad ? why it is yourself all the time. Have you quite forgotten who Gressian is ? don’t you know that he is proud and touchy, and

will put up with no affront, and that he will throw six such as you out of the mill with his little finger ? and besides what would folks say then ?—that Selmel the Brookmiller's daughter kept company with Gressian, and that the miller packed him off all in a hurry ;—and would that do you credit, think you ? no, no, it would be biting off your nose to spite your own face, as the proverb says. Mind what I tell you, for you get crosser every day ; and what is still worse, you grow more and more stupid. If my word goes for anything, Selmel shall marry Gressian. Was not I poor, when you fell in love with me, like an old fool as you are ? and why should not Selmel, who is quite as rich, marry a poor man ? Gressian is a good fellow and a man of honour ; if he had wished to seduce her, it would have happened long ago, for I really believe that Selmel would have been only too glad ; but he has never had the heart to say a word to her of his love. So just go to bed and sleep upon it : night brings counsel."

"Night brings mischief," answered the miller hastily. "What nonsense have you been talking to me all this time ! I don't understand a word of it."

“I tell you once more,” said she, “that with one hand Gressian would make mincemeat of six such Brookmillers as you, and so now you had better go and turn him out of the mill.” The old man picked up his arm-chair and sat down in it again; and his wife, who had attained her object, got back into bed after locking the door and taking out the key.

Early next morning the Brookmiller ordered his horse to be saddled to ride to Drusenheim. As he mounted, Gressian wished him good morning, and he replied with a good grace. He had come to the following determination. The Notary in Drusenheim had long been a suitor for Selmel's hand, but her father had not thought him rich enough. Now however that every one said that Selmel had grown melancholy, he was forced to overlook the loss of a few dollars. His wife's advice, not to turn Gressian out of the house all on a sudden had met with his approval during the course of the night. He was however fully resolved to get rid of him, and he accordingly determined to betroth Selmel to the Notary, without the knowledge of her mother, and then to dismiss Gressian.

The notary was not so well pleased as the miller had anticipated. "I have been told," said he, "that Selmel is insane,—nay people have hinted that it is a family failing." But the Brookmiller told him all the love-affair with Gressian, and assured him that her madness was entirely feigned; hereupon the promise before witnesses took place. The Brookmiller promised twenty thousand francs down, (his fortune amounted to above half a million,) fifty meadows and fields, two horses and two cows, a house and stabling: the Notary brought twenty thousand francs. It was to be inserted in the *contrat de mariage*, that, if Selmel died without children, this was all to go to the family of the Notary; but nothing more, for the Brookmiller chose to dispose of the rest of his property himself at his own death. Thus the bargain was struck. The Notary accompanied his future father-in-law home, and together they entered the house, which already had a disastrous aspect: for the look of a house foreshews when some dark calamity threatens it.

Selmel gave no token of surprise when her father

announced to her the approaching change in her condition. The ironical lines about the corners of her mouth had meantime increased so greatly as to become almost a grimace. For a long time she had played a perfectly passive part in the house: she worked little, thought much, and was constantly gloomy and sullen, even towards her mother, who did not venture to speak out boldly to her child, because she still wished and hoped that the affair would quietly take a favourable turn. In the evening however the Brook-miller informed the bridegroom in Selmel's presence that folks indeed said that his daughter was in love with the foreman of the mill, but that for his part he had never believed it, and was persuaded that all this stubbornness would disappear after the wedding. Selmel's lips twitched and quivered, but she was silent.

On the following morning, when the father and mother and the betrothed couple were sitting at breakfast, Gressian, dressed in his Sunday clothes, and with his glazed hat in his hand, unexpectedly stepped into the room, followed by his brother Natzi and two other workmen. The Notary being well acquainted with Selmel's history, immediately guessed

that this was the foreman in question ; for she blushed up to the roots of her hair, and then turned deadly pale : he therefore looked at him with a keen and searching glance. "What do you want, Gressian ?" asked the miller : "you have not yet wished us joy."

"I want my wages, sir ; from this moment I am no longer your servant : I am going away. The last fortnight of my services, sir, you shall have for nothing." Selmel nodded approvingly : Gressian's manner pleased her.

"Well," said the old miller, "if you will have it so, I must let you go, though I am sorry for it, very sorry, for you have served me faithfully."

"Fiddle-de-dee !" muttered Natzi : "honey and vinegar, that is only good to catch flies."

"What do I owe you, my good Gressian ?" asked the old miller.

"I have served you ten years and a few days,—a thousand francs." The old miller rose, went into the alcove, fetched a bag of money, counted out a thousand francs, and handed them to him.

"And the interest," cried Natzi ; "in ten years there should be interest."

"Hold your tongue," said Gressian sharply; "I don't want any interest."

"Because you are a fool," retorted his brother.

"And what will you do now, Gressian? where are you going?" asked the old miller. Gressian was silent.

"Tell me honestly, Gressian,—how much have you gained in fees during the last ten years? the mill has seven pair of stones, remember." Selmel stood up hastily from her seat.

"Ten thousand francs," said Gressian shortly.

"Mr. Notary," cried the miller to his future son-in-law, "you had better turn miller's man too, for I doubt if you can save ten thousand francs in so short a time. You are an honest lad, Gressian. I never in all my life should have guessed that my mill brings in a thousand francs a-year in fees. And what have you done with all this money?"

"I have bought land at Rohrwiller from the Jews, which I paid for little by little, and which is now worth a third more than I gave for it."

"And what are you going to do with yourself now?" asked the old miller once more.

"Why," replied Gressian impatiently, "I am going to marry my cousin Kate who lives at Rohrwiller." At this moment Selmel uttered a piercing shriek, and rushed into the alcove, where she threw herself upon her father's bed and sobbed aloud. The miller took no notice of her, but her mother and the Notary ran after her to console her. Selmel pushed them both away, at first gently, and then with violence, and ran out into the garden.

"What is he going to do?"—cried Natzi now, "Why, sir, you did not build all the mills in the world yourself. Gressian and I are going to build ourselves a new one: fifteen thousand francs will build a mill with four pair of stones, and the water was not all made for the Brookmiller; so you may take my word for it, the Brookmill will keep holiday pretty often now."

These words were a stab that went home to the old miller's heart, and gave him a pang, such as his daughter's shriek of despair had failed to inflict.

"Build a mill, you fool, you cowardly knave!" shouted he at Natzi: "if Gressian had only had

courage and sense he would have been the Brook-miller himself by this time. Why did he not come and ask me for Selmel? he has bewitched her as it is. Upon my honour I would not have refused him. But now it is too late; Selmel is betrothed, and I have given my word, and that I never break, as Gresian well knows."

False as these words were, they did not miss their effect upon the simple-hearted, straightforward Gresian. But Natzi, who was somewhat of a rogue himself, was not so easily taken in. "Yes, yes, you think you may talk in that way without fear, Mr. Brookmiller, because Selmel is betrothed: but do you suppose I don't know that you wanted to turn my brother neck and heels out of the mill? Do you think, you old villain, that I don't know that Selmel's mother would have been glad to give her daughter to my brother? I know all about it, and if I did not tell my brother, it only was because he is such a milksop. But only mark my words, you old rogue! I shall have the upper-hand of you one day, and then I'll take care to make you eat humble pie. If I had been in my brother's place, I would have seduced

your daughter and laughed at you into the bargain."

These words rattled out of Natzi's mouth like water over the mill-wheel. The old miller foamed with rage, and Gressian, without waiting for the end of the harangue, opened the door with one hand, while with the other he shoved out his brother, who offered no resistance to him. The miller was pleased at this, but he was perfectly amazed when Gressian said to him, "You need not believe a word, sir, of all that my brother has said just now. He has long been wanting to build a mill, but I will have nothing to do with it so long as you live. I won't wrong the man whose bread I have eaten; I will never turn your own money against you. I shall go to Rohrwiller, marry my cousin, and turn peasant. Adieu, sir! I hope you are not offended with me—goodbye!" With these words he put his money into his pocket and went towards the door.

"Gressian!" cried the old miller, whose eyes now filled with tears, "give me your hand. By heaven you are a good lad, and I have done you wrong!" But Gressian's hand was already upon the latch, and

he hurried off without making any answer. Two other men left the miller's service at the same time, and accompanied Gressian, his brother and Marie, to Rohrwiller. Marie told them that Selmel was running frantically about the fields, and that her father seemed sorry for what he had done. "What is that to me?" said Gressian at length: "if he were to come tomorrow and offer me his daughter, I should be a dastard to take her. They are all eaten up with pride; even Selmel and her mother were always too proud to say a word to me about the matter. Kate was quite right; in a fortnight I shall be her husband, and henceforth I wish to hear nothing more of the miller and his whole family."

A fortnight later Gressian was married at Rohrwiller; and Selmel, who seemed to have cried herself out and was perfectly quiet, was married at Drusenheim. The whole romance appeared to be ended, and Selmel seemed well and contented.

Among cultivated people the understanding, or rather the powers of apprehension are far more de-

veloped than the heart, unless indeed the latter happens to be very large by nature. With common people, on the contrary, the understanding is cultivated more or less, but is always overpowered by the heart. The educated man reasons and endeavours to become an optimist; that is to say, with the aid of time he submits to circumstances, and endeavours to master them by the force of habit. The man of the people lacks this advantage—he must conquer or die. He can only reason up to a certain point, and when he has reached that, the whole edifice falls at the breath of a sigh, and nature resumes her rights. For this reason the people may be captivated by a speech; but if at the end of that speech there should occur one word that wounds their prejudices or the cherished feelings of their hearts, it will all have been in vain.

Selmel was a girl of the people, proud, cunning, prudent, straightforward and kind. She had a certain amount of cultivation of mind, for she had read the Bible diligently. But this culture, such as it was, had not penetrated into her heart. Her prejudices remained the same, her passions showed

themselves in the same manner ; and though she passed for the cleverest girl in the whole parish, in a city she would have been considered as a stupid, ignorant little goose. Her nature however was superior to her artificial training ; this indeed was her misfortune. For months past she had let herself go : she had taken it into her head that she should never be allowed to marry Gressian, and she therefore took no steps to accomplish it. A town-bred girl would have thrown herself at her parents' feet, but such proceedings are unknown to village folks. She had however resolved to get rid of all her suitors by artifice and insolence, and she did it in spite of her parents. Now however, when the struggle was at an end, her energy totally relaxed, and she became melancholy in reality. When Gressian declared that he was about to marry Kate, she felt as if a sharp knife were thrust into her heart. Anguish gave her new power, and she was able to shed tears, which was some solace to her melancholy. She married the Notary from sheer indifference, and because she had nothing more to hope from life. In so doing she played a merely passive, suffering part, like that

of a town-bred girl of sixteen, a thing which seldom happens in the country, where girls choose far more according to their inclinations than those who dwell in towns are willing to believe.

Selmel's apparent resignation to her fate was like the dead calm which precedes a storm. The Notary let her go her own way, and thought that her brooding silence betokened nothing but happiness to himself. One day however, in a fit of tenderness, he approached her with open arms endeavouring to kiss her. "What do you want of me?" cried she, gazing wildly at him.—"Why," replied he, "I want to embrace my wife, my dear Selmel!" The word wife seemed to strike her like an electric shock, and to send a shudder through every fibre of her body. "Your wife!" cried she; and hurling him from her with unwonted force, she drew the bodkin from her hair and ran after him with it. If some people had not come to his assistance she would certainly have killed him. Furious and with streaming hair she attacked all who opposed her, and it was not until after a long struggle that she was secured and carried back to the mill to be taken care of. On such occa-

sions, in the country as in the town, there is nothing for it but to fetch the doctor. The doctor accordingly came every day, and every day he discovered more and more clearly that Selmel had gone mad from love.

One day however her former friend Kate, Gressian's wife, came to visit her. Strangely enough Selmel caressed her just as a wife may caress her husband. It so chanced that the physician came in, and he thought it significant when he heard that Kate was the wife of Selmel's former lover. Neither her father nor her mother dared to appear before her, as the sight of them threw her into a paroxysm of fury. Kate alone could coax her to be quiet. On perceiving this the physician determined to bring Gressian himself into her presence, thinking that the sight of him might bring her disorder to a crisis. He was to be requested to visit her on the following Sunday, but in the meantime Selmel's mother fell ill. Grief for her lost child, whom she dared not see though living in the same house, had broken her heart, and on that very Sunday she was carried to the grave.

On the Monday morning the old Brookmiller set out to walk to Rohrwiller, with his hat in his hand and his white hair uncovered. Grief had shaken him too to the core. He trembled in his gait, and kept his eyes fixed upon the ground. On a sudden he stepped into Gressian's room, with uncovered head and streaming eyes.

"Gressian," said he, "I have good reason to know that you are a man of honour. Don't reproach me now: I well know that all my misfortunes are my own making. But you too never chose to open your lips. Now I am all alone: my old woman is dead; Selmel, your Selmel, is sick; the mill stands still, and I wish for nothing but death, which I hope will soon take pity upon me. Do but come over to me: take the mill—it shall be yours; only take Selmel and me into the bargain: your wife can take care of me and of her too. Pray come, and forgive your poor old miller. I always loved you spite of all." Gressian embraced his old master warmly, and accompanied him home. He turned pale when he saw Selmel who laughed and nodded to him, without knowing who he was.

A week later Gressian was once more living at the mill: his wife took tender care of Selmel, and before long she could be left to herself without fear. The miller died shortly after, leaving his whole property to Gressian. The Notary was well content with his twenty thousand francs and his fifty acres of land, and enjoys life at Strasburg. Gressian christened his eldest daughter Selmel.

Selmel has now been living ten years with Gressian. She is perfectly quiet, and only seems profoundly melancholy. At certain times of the year however, particularly about the time of the hay harvest, she has violent convulsions. Poor Selmel! she has already suffered much, very much: she is changed beyond all recognition, and still suffers incessantly. Pray for her!

THE END.

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